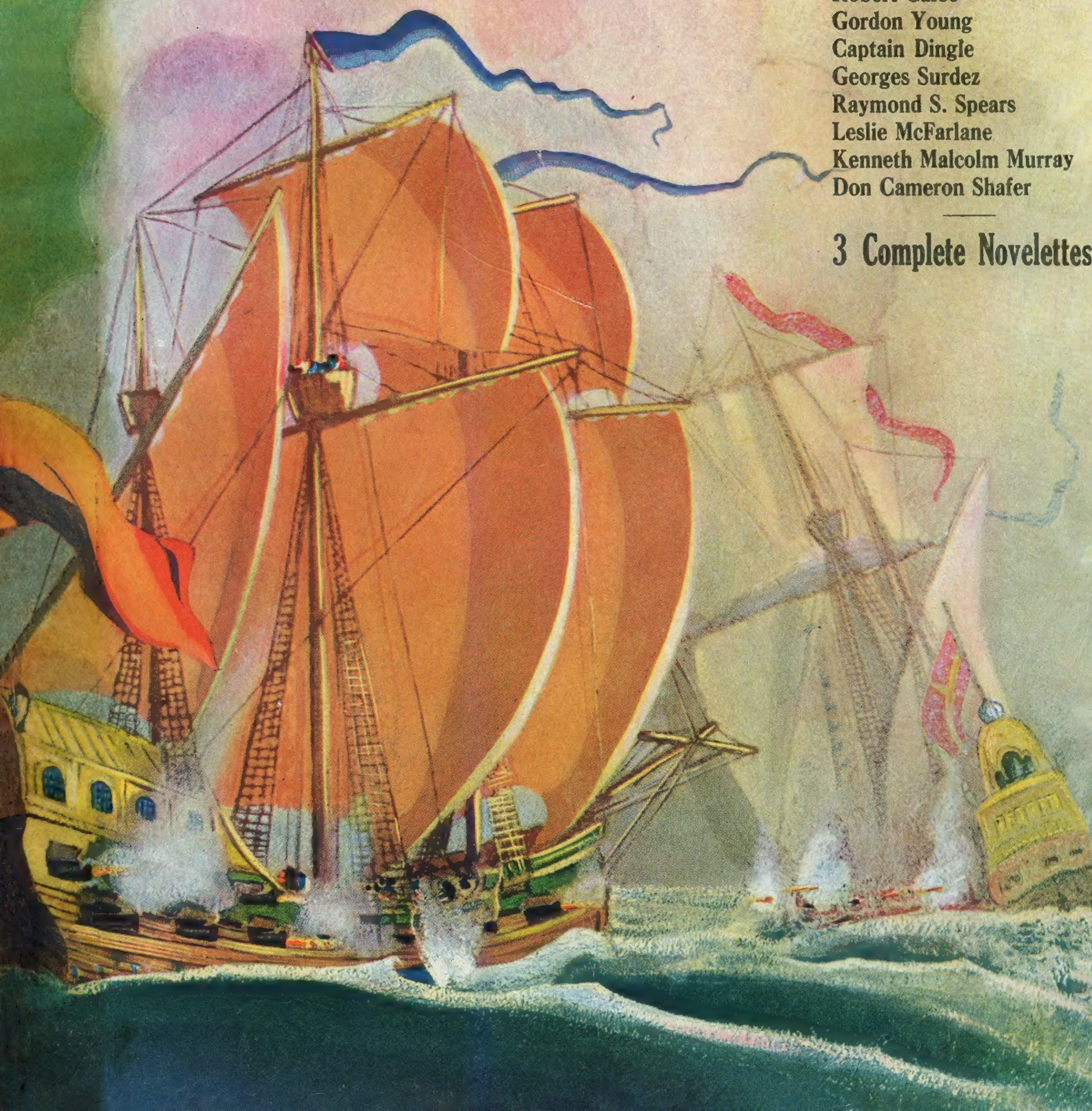
JANUARY
20th
1926
25c

PUBLISHED
THREE TIMES A MONTH

Adventure

T. S. Stribling
Robert Carse
Gordon Young
Captain Dingle
Georges Surdez
Raymond S. Spears
Leslie McFarlane
Kenneth Malcolm Murray
Don Cameron Shafer

3 Complete Novelettes



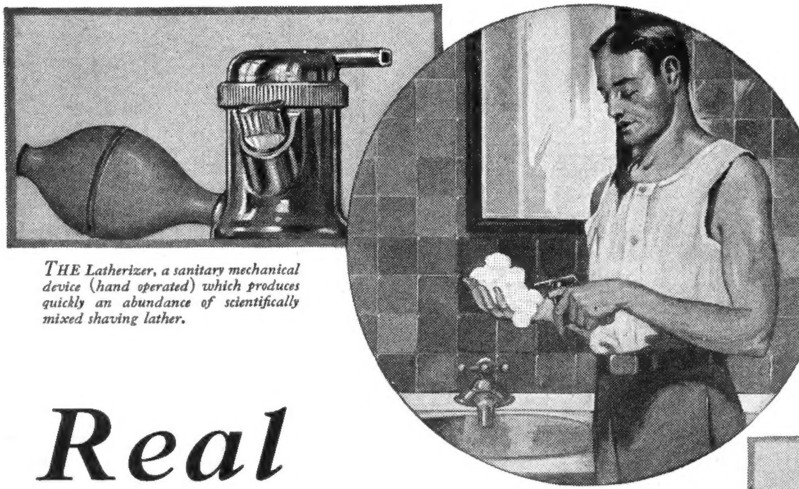
Isn't it worth it?

IN THE PAST twenty years, Fatima has been more widely imitated probably, than any other cigarette—yet today it is as distinctive as ever, in richness of taste, in mildness, in delicacy of aroma. A few cents more, yes—but you get the *real thing*. That's the difference

FATIMA
TURKISH BLEND CIGARETTES
Cameron & Cameron Co
RICHMOND, VA.
FATIMA

WHAT A WHALE OF A DIFFERENCE JUST A FEW CENTS MAKE

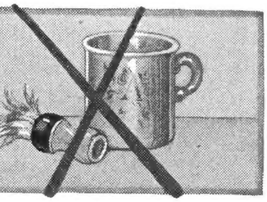
LIGGETT & MYERS TOBACCO CO.



THE Latherizer, a sanitary mechanical device (hand operated) which produces quickly an abundance of scientifically mixed shaving lather.

By-gone days of the dog-gone shaving brush

NORA used your brush for cleaning silver. After the plumber had fixed the sink, it had a distracted look. In the soap-jelly at its roots is imbedded a microbe history which explains much about facial soreness. Put your antiquated shaving brush up in the attic with the pink and gold mug "To Daddy from Baby." It belongs to an age when men were less fastidious about shaving, the age of once-a-week baths.



Real lather—NOW!

No more brush-made frothy foam

MODERN science gives you a quicker, cleaner way of making shaving lather. The lather is better than shaving brush ever made. In this lather the mixture of air—water—soap is perfect, having been done by a mechanical device. The lather is of such fine texture that it penetrates the toughest beard without rubbing-in.

Try this mechanical device, the Latherizer, for 10 days. If you do not find this Latherizer more than you could possibly have expected, return it to us and we will return the full purchase price. The 10 days' use has cost you nothing.

Now, think about these big differences between the Latherizer and the old-fashioned shaving brush: Instead of working up the lather on the face and irritating the skin by this friction, the lather in the Latherizer is already made for you, merely by pressing the bulb, thus forcing air and water against a cake of super-fine soap.

In the Latherizer all the soap is completely dissolved. No soap burn on skin. No clogging of razor.

The Latherizer is supremely sanitary, all the mixing of lather being done in a metal chamber.

Brush-made lather dries quickly, big bubbles explode. Latherizer lather is composed of millions of tiniest bubbles. It holds water. It softens hair roots down to the base.

It takes only 30 seconds to get finest lather with the Latherizer. Merely slip a slug of the superfine soap into the Latherizer. This lasts for 18 or 20 shaves. For each shave, put water in the metal chamber. Press the bulb once or twice. Out comes a great quantity of finest lather. If you wish more lather for second shaving, merely another press of the bulb and you have it. It saves time.

Try this Latherizer for 10 days and you will discard the shaving brush forever.

Retailers:

SOON the Latherizer and soap re-fills will be sold through retail channels only. Sales will be backed by big national advertising campaign. Write now for terms and facts which will reveal to you one of the biggest propositions in the history of merchandising.

THE LATHERIZER CORP.
Dept. C-1 452 Fifth Avenue
Retail Promotion Dept.
New York City

SEND COUPON

THE LATHERIZER CORP.
Dept. C-1, 452 Fifth Avenue, New York.

Gentlemen: Under your guarantee to refund the full purchase price, if I return the Latherizer complete after 10 days' use, you may send me the Latherizer (3 slugs of soap included). I enclose $5 (check, currency, P. O. Money Order) as full payment. If I return the Latherizer I will not be charged for any of the soap (1 cake) used in the trial, and will receive back at once the full $5.

Name ....

Address ....

City .... *State* ....

ADVENTURE
Jan. 20th, 1926

Published three times a month by The Ridgway Company at Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York, N. Y. Yearly subscription $6.00 in advance; single copy 25 cents. Entered as second-class matter Oct. 1, 1910, at the post-office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879.

Volume 56
Number 5

ASK ANY RADIO ENGINEER

BURGESS RADIO "A" BATTERY
BURGESS B BATTERY
BURGESS

Contributors to your radio entertainment

VERY probably hidden away in the cabinet of your receiving set, the batteries you use are nevertheless surrendering their power unseen and unheard.

And to be able to contribute their energy and to add to the complete efficiency of your receiving equipment, those batteries must combine every desirable factor and formula known in the electrochemical field.

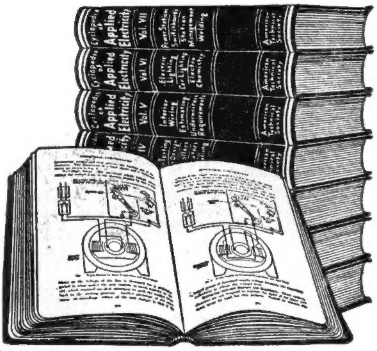
Such Batteries are Burgess—products of the Burgess Laboratories—products which have been used by practically every famous explorer, the majority of amateurs and the leading radio engineers.

That's why when you use Burgess Radio 'A', 'B' and 'C' Batteries you are using batteries which assure the utmost dependability, longer life and complete satisfaction.

BURGESS BATTERY COMPANY
GENERAL SALES OFFICE: CHICAGO

Canadian Factories and Offices:
Niagara Falls and Winnipeg

BURGESS RADIO BATTERIES



8 BIG BOOKS *on Electricity*

Here is an amazing offer on 8 big electrical books, brimful of interesting and valuable facts and illustrations on electricity; facts that will increase your pay if you learn how to use them.

Read all about our

NO MONEY OFFER

To make it possible for every man with a spark of ambition in his make-up to benefit by this easy way of learning, we have set aside a limited number of complete sets to be sent FREE, without a penny down. Look the books over; read them and see how complete and thoroughly all subjects are treated and yet how plain and easy to understand. Take ten days to do this and then if you don't realize how helpful and profitable they can be to you, send them back. If, however, your own good judgment proves their value and you see how profitable having them will be, just send us $2.00 and only $3.00 per month until the special price of only $29.80 is paid.

FACTS THAT INCREASE YOUR PAY

Knowing means earning. The man that has specialized knowledge or knows where to get it ALWAYS makes the most money. Here is your opportunity, your chance to get into the Bigger Pay Class.

You don't have to read the books through; the jiffy index is complete and simple. YOU CAN PUT YOUR FINGER ON THE FACTS YOU WANT TO KNOW IN A FEW SECONDS.

Get these books now, don't hesitate—no offer could be more liberal.

MEMBERSHIP FREE

In addition to this unusually complete set of 8 full volumes bound in new flexo covers we will for a limited time include a certificate of consulting membership in the American Technical Society which will entitle you to FREE consultation service. Twenty highly paid experts will be ready to help you, entirely without cost to you.

Don't let this opportunity slip by; send for your books NOW. Use the coupon below.

American Technical Society,
Special Dept. E-126, Chicago, Ill.

You may send me the Big Books—Applied Electricity. If I like them I will send you $2.00 in ten days after I receive them and $3.00 per month until only $29.80 has been paid; otherwise I will return the books and will not owe you anything.

Name ....

Address ....

City .... State ....

Reference ....

Learn to Mount Birds

Learn **at home** to mount **birds, animals, game heads; tan furs, make rugs and robes.** Complete lessons. Easily and quickly learned by men, boys and women.

FREE Write for **Free Taxidermy Book.** Tells all about it. Every sportsman, trapper and Nature lover **should** know this wonderful fascinating art. Save your trophies. Big profits. Success guaranteed. 75,000 graduates. Investigate. Write for Free Book.

Northwestern School of Taxidermy 1011 Elwood Bldg., Omaha, Neb.

Wrestling Book FREE

Be an expert wrestler. Learn at home by mail. Wonderful lessons prepared by world's champions **Farmer Burns and Frank Gotch. Free book** tells you how. Secret holds, blocks and tricks revealed. Don't delay. Be strong, healthy. Handle big men with ease. Write for free book. State age.

Farmer Burns School, 1011 Railway Bldg., Omaha, Neb.

Adventure

Registered in
U. S. Patent Office

January 20, 1926
Vol. LVI No. 5

Published Three Times a Month by THE RIDGWAY COMPANY

J. H. GANNON, President
C. H. HOLMES, Secretary and Treasurer

Spring and Macdougal Streets - - New York, N. Y.
6, Henrietta St., Covent Garden, London, W. C., England

Entered as Second-Class Matter, October 1, 1910, at the Post-Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, Editor

Yearly Subscription, $6.00 in advance
Single Copy, Twenty-Five Cents

Foreign postage, $3.00 additional. Canadian Postage, 90 cents.

Trade-Mark Registered; Copyright, 1925, by The Ridgway Company in the United States and Great Britain. Entered at Stationers' Hall, London, England.

The editor assumes no risk for manuscripts and illustrations submitted to this magazine, but he will use all due care while they are in his hands.

Contents for January 20th, 1926, Issue

Dregs of Defeat *A Complete Novelette* . . . . . . Georges Surdez 7
France—one man must die.

The Were-Cougar **An Off-the-Trail Story* . . . . . Raymond S. Spears 53
Southwest—the great cats were his friends.

Toby's White Rats . . . . Captain Dingle 64
Sea—*Sails* loved his animals.

Vanished Annuities . . . . Faunce Rochester 71

Hunter's Code . . . . Don Cameron Shafer 72
Southern mountains—who gets the kill?

La Rue of the 88 *A Five-Part Story Part III* . . . . . Gordon Young 82
West—cowpunchers fight for their friends.

Orlick the Eagle . . . . Kenneth Malcolm Murray 110
Russia—the Borzoi was too valuable to lose.

When Kit Carson Went to Washington . . . . . F. W. Hodge 122

**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

(Continued on next page)

(Continued from preceding page)

The King of Matabanick *A Complete Novelette* . . . . Leslie McFarlane 123
Canada—the Indians hated their master.

Cockney . . . . Robert Carse 149
Atlantic—"I am Levi, the Russe."

Cajuns *A Queer People* . . . . Nevil Henshaw 155

The Prints of Hantoun *A Complete Novelette* . . . . . T. S. Stribling 156
Martinique—a psychologist in action.

The Camp-Fire A free-to-all meeting-place for readers, writers and adventurers 176

Old Songs That Men Have Sung 184

Various Practical Services Free to Any Reader 184

Ask Adventure 185

A free question and answer service bureau of information on outdoor life and activities everywhere. Comprising seventy-four geographical sub-divisions, with special sections on Radio, Mining and Prospecting, Weapons, Fishing, Forestry, Aviation, Army Matters, North American Anthropology, Health on the Trail, Railroading, Herpetology and Entomology.

Lost Trails 191

The Trail Ahead 192

Headings . . . . V. E. Pyles

Cover Design . . . . Leonard A. Simonsen

Three Complete Novelettes

HORSES, as "*Hashknife*" *Hartley* told "*Sleepy*" *Stevens*, don't vanish into thin air. But horses disappeared from the Five Dot and Bar 3 ranches. This was the state of things when *Hashknife* and *Sleepy* rode into the Wild Horse country on the Little Powder River to buy a ranch and settle down. "VANISHING BRANDS," a complete novelette by W. C. Tuttle, will appear in the next issue

FROM the black heart of the hills, where lay the swarming kraal of *M'Hoy*, came the dread monotone of the tom-tom. And when *Percival Roe*, Native Commissioner, cried in most righteous indignation about "our bestiality toward our black brothers," greasy, wily *M'Hoy* grinned cunningly. "THE IMPERTINENCE OF M'HOY," a complete novelette by L. Patrick Greene, will be in our next issue.

"*DUKE*" *DALY* happened to be in Louisville on Derby Day. He happened to be in the lobby of a hotel when one of the most daring robberies the city could remember occurred. And other things happened in quick succession, especially a break with his old pal, *MacDowell*. "A NEW DEAL FOR THE DUKE," a complete novelette by Thomson Burtis, will appear in the next issue.

***Adventure* is out on the 10th, 20th and 30th of each month**

65 YEARS YOUNG!

A Youth at 65—All Because He Keeps His Spine a Half Inch Longer Than It Would Ordinarily Measure.

IMAGINE it—a man of 65 passing for a man of 40! Yet that is actually the case of Hobart Bradstreet, whose photograph, taken only last summer, you see here.

Look at the man! Would you ever guess him to be of grandfather age? Would you, indeed, put his age at 40? I, for one, guessed him to be *under* that mark.

Not only in appearance, but in *every other* way, Bradstreet is still in his thirties, even though his age is 65. In fact, for "pep," activity and sparkle he would put most 30-year-olds to shame. I *know*, for I have seen Bradstreet in action, and I am only 35 and supposed to be a pretty fair physical specimen myself.

Almost three-score and ten, when most men are "through," Bradstreet, as he himself puts it, is *"just beginning to enjoy life!"* His job requires him to work like a horse, yet it never seems to tell on him. After an eight or ten hour stretch at work, he can go out and play for hours like a youngster. His recreation and pleasures are those of an active youth.

How does he do it? By living the "simple life"? Not so you could notice it! Bradstreet follows no "how-to-live-to-be-100" rules. You could never tie him down to any health institute régime. He eats what and when he pleases. As a smoker he has no choice between cigar, cigarette or pipe. And rarely does he get over seven hours sleep a night. Bradstreet—as I happen to know—likes a "good time" even though it runs into the wee hours.

How does he do it? I'll tell you the whole secret. *Hobart Bradstreet keeps his spine a half inch longer than it would ordinarily measure!*

What does that mean? You'll understand when you know something of the wonderful story of the spine.

The spine, the foundation of the body, is a series of small bones (vertebræ) placed one above the other. Between each pair of bones is a pad of cartilage which acts as a cushion or shock-absorber, taking up the weight and shocks thrown on the spinal column as we stand or walk. Since nothing in the ordinary activities of us humans stretches the spine, these once soft and resilient pads are flattened down—become thin and hard as the felt pads under piano keys do. One's spine, then, doesn't absorb the shocks sustained, but transmits them straight to *the base of the brain*. You know what happens then. The whole nervous system is affected. Then we begin to feel "out of sorts" as a general thing. We develop headaches and backaches. A day's work completely fags us. We go home at night with nerves apounding, unable to rest or sleep. We become cross and cranky, moody and morose. We begin to *feel and look old and worn!*

The secret of keeping young and alert and vigorous, as Bradstreet learned years ago in his study of the spine, is to keep the spine from "settling down"—to keep it *normally long* by giving it the peculiar motion, the flexing, the laxation it would get if we lived as naturally as we should, as early man lived. No amount of violent exercise will do the trick. As for walking or golfing, the spine only settles down a bit firmer with each step.

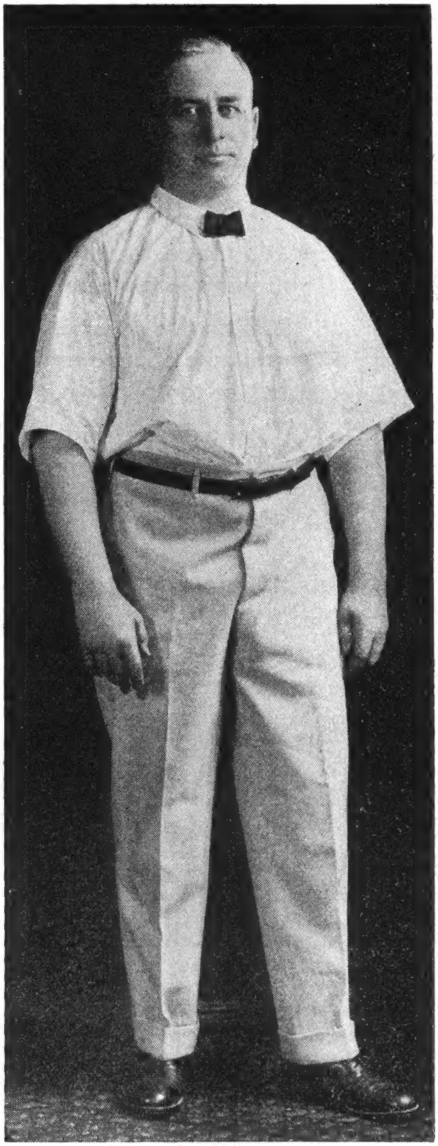
Judging from the results obtained in his own case and in the case of hundreds of others, Bradstreet seems to have in his method of "laxating" the spine the answer to the problem.

Bradstreet's method for "elongating" and "laxating" the spine is so simple as to be almost ridiculous. Just five movements to the whole thing—the whole five gone through in five minutes. Taking only five minutes a day, it is hard to believe that there should be anything wonderful about the results. But I know the surprise *one* session with Bradstreet's SPINE-MOTION gave *me!* I thrilled with a feeling of exhilaration that was altogether new to me.

Several people to whom Bradstreet referred me told me they had never known what it was to be fully alive until they had taken up his SPINE-MOTION. Among them were some who had suffered for years from some such trouble as headache, nervousness, stomach trouble or constipation.

There is a surprise in store for everyone in Bradstreet's SPINE-MOTION. The young learn that they have not been as young as they thought they were. And those who have been aging in any sense under 60, will come to the conclusion that there is, after all, something to Bradstreet's statement that a man's powers in every sense should continue unabated up to 65.

Without any payment whatever, would you like to try this way of "coming back"? Or, if young, and apparently normal in your action and feelings, do you want to see your energies just about doubled? It is easy. No "apparatus" is required. Just Bradstreet's few, simple instructions, made doubly clear by his photographic poses of the five positions. Results come amazingly quick. In less than a week you'll have new health, new appetite, new desire, and new capacities; you'll feel years lifted off mind and body. This miracle-man's method can be tested without any advance payment. If you feel enormously benefited, everything is yours to keep by mailing only $3! Knowing something of the fees this man has been accustomed to receiving, I hope his naming $3 to the general public will have full appreciation.



HOBART BRADSTREET

The $3 which pays for everything is not sent in advance, nor do you make any payment or deposit on delivery. The trial is absolutely *free*. Requests will be answered in turn. Try how it feels to have a full-length spine, and you'll henceforth pity men and women whose nerves are in a vise!

HOBART BRADSTREET, Suite 5516
630 S. Wabash Ave., Chicago, Ill.

I will try your SPINE-MOTION without risk if you will provide necessary instruction. Send everything postpaid, without any charge or obligation, and I will try it five days. If I find SPINE-MOTION highly beneficial I can remit just $3 in full payment; otherwise I will return the material and will owe you nothing.

Name ....

Address ....

YOU are probably sick and tired of reading endless arguments about tooth paste—which to use and why.

¶ Here is the story of Listerine Tooth Paste in a nut-shell:

¶ It's made by the makers of Listerine. It tastes the way you want it to taste. It does its work well.

¶ It is sold at a price you like—25 cents for the large tube. And if we charged you a dollar a tube we couldn't offer you a better tooth paste.

¶ Try it once * and we'll wager you'll come back for more —unless you're different from thousands of people who have switched to Listerine Tooth Paste.

Lambert Pharmacal Company
St. Louis, U. S. A.

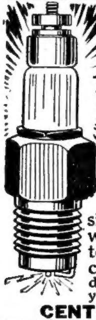
*Its wonderful refreshing effect alone has converted thousands to the use of this paste.

LISTERINE TOOTH PASTE

Large Tube—25 Cents

AGENTS NEW SPARK PLUG

Visible Flash



Just Out—Amazing Invention—**Beacon Lite** Spark Plugs. You see the flash of each explosion in the cylinders. Tells which are firing right. Greatest improvement in spark plugs since gas engines were invented. Wonderful gas savers. Agents coining money.

$90 A WEEK Easy to make with new sure-fire plans. Sells on sight to every auto owner. Phillips, Ont., writes "Sold 2 dozen today, 3 dozen yesterday. Rush 10 dozen." Write for special **Free** Demonstrator Offer and FREE deal to introduce these wonder spark plugs in your territory. Write quick—**today.**

CENTRAL PETROLEUM COMPANY
1732 Century Building Cleveland, Ohio

Play Jazz in a week

on your **Buescher Saxophone**

You can do it—easy. 3 lessons free with each new instrument give you a quick start. Practicing is fun because you learn so fast. And it will make you popular, in demand, the center of attraction everywhere you go. Always a hit. Even if you have failed with some other instrument, you can learn the simplified Buescher Saxophone. Don't delay. Get into the big fun. Any instrument sent for 6 days' free trial. Easy terms if you decide to buy. Write now for beautiful, free literature. Address:

Buescher Band Instrument Co. (1-X)
1072 Buescher Block Elkhart, Indiana

Guards ALL the teeth
Pro-phy-lac-tic
REG. IN U.S. PAT. OFF.

Are You Unhappy Because of

Gray Hair?

Then read this advertisement and learn how to stop it. It explains how a dainty hair cosmetic restores original color. Then accept free trial bottle which proves it.

This scientific preparation is clear and colorless—applied by combing through the hair. The gray disappears like magic—in a few days it's gone.

No interference with shampooing — there's nothing to wash or rub off. Restored color is even and perfect—no "dyed" look.

Now, Mail Coupon

You'll quickly receive Patented Trial Kit with instructions for testing on a single lock. Then call on druggist for full size bottle, or order direct from me.

Please print your name and address

Mary T. Goldman, 948-A Goldman Bldg., St. Paul, Minn.

Please send your patented Free Trial Outfit. X shows color of hair. Black....dark brown....medium brown ....auburn (dark red).... light brown.... light auburn (light red)....blonde....

Name..

Street............................ *City*.....................

Play the HAWAIIAN GUITAR Just as the Natives Do

FREE when you enroll **$15 HAWAIIAN GUITAR and Case**

Only 4 Motions used in playing this fascinating instrument. Our native Hawaiian instructors teach you to master them quickly. Pictures show how. Everything explained clearly.

Play in Half Hour

After you get the four easy motions you play harmonious chords with very little practice. No previous musical knowledge necessary.

Easy Lessons

Even if you don't know one note from another, the 52 printed lessons and the clear pictures make it easy to learn quickly. Pay as you play.

Free Guitar

and Outfit in Genuine Seal Grain Fabrikoid Case as soon as you enroll. Nothing to buy—everything furnished. No delay.

Write at Once

You'll never be lonesome with this beautiful Hawaiian Guitar. Write for Special Offer and easy terms. A postcard will do. ACT!

FIRST HAWAIIAN CONSERVATORY of MUSIC, Inc.
9th Floor, Woolworth Bldg., Dept. 134, New York, N. Y.
Approved as a Correspondence School Under the Laws of the State of New York

MR. C. E. BROOKS

DON'T WEAR A TRUSS

BE COMFORTABLE—
Wear the Brooks Appliance, the modern scientific invention which gives rupture sufferers immediate relief. It has no obnoxious springs or pads. Automatic Air Cushions bind and draw together the broken parts. No salves or plasters. Durable. Cheap. Sent on trial to prove its worth. Beware of imitations. Look for trade-mark bearing portrait and signature of C. E. Brooks which appears on every appliance. None other genuine. Full information and booklet sent free in plain, sealed envelope.

BROOKS APPLIANCE CO., 222-B State St., Marshall, Mich.

Chosen Out of 100 Applicants

The Way to Bigger Income

"To LaSalle goes the credit for training me so that I was able to turn a refusal into an acceptance in preference to over one hundred other applicants," writes E. W. DeMotte, a New York man. "I cannot give too much credit to LaSalle and its Placement Department for the success of my application for this very fine position." LaSalle trained him. LaSalle got him the job.

"My investment in LaSalle training," writes J. B. Lewels, "has already paid me, during two months alone, an actual cash profit of 300 per cent."

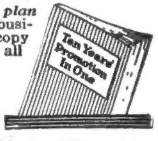
Send for Salary-Doubling Plan

Such records as those just cited are within the reach of any man who will set his goal toward real success. During only six months' time as many as 1,248 LaSalle members reported definite salary-increases totalling $1,399,507, ***an average increase per man of 89 per cent.***

If you are in earnest when you say that you want to get ahead, you will not be satisfied until you have put this kind of training to the test—exchanged it, just as thousands have done, for a bigger income.

The details of the LaSalle Problem Method—often spoken of as the ***salary-doubling plan***—will be sent you for the asking. Whether you adopt the plan or not, the basic information it will place in your hands, without cost, is of very real and definite value. And it's FREE.

Balance the two minutes that it takes to fill out the coupon against the rewards of a successful career—then clip and mail the coupon NOW.


Ten Years' Promotion In One

LA SALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY
The World's Largest Business Training Institution
Dept. 176-R Chicago

Tell me about your ***salary-doubling plan*** as applied to my advancement in the business field checked below. Send also copy of "Ten Years' Promotion in One," all without obligation.

- ☐ Business Management
- ☐ Modern Salesmanship
- ☐ Higher Accountancy
- ☐ Traffic Management
- ☐ Railway Station Management
- ☐ Law—Degree of LL.B.
- ☐ Commercial Law
- ☐ Industrial Management
- ☐ Modern Foremanship and Production Methods
- ☐ Personnel and Employment Management
- ☐ Banking and Finance
- ☐ Modern Business Correspondence and Practice
- ☐ Expert Bookkeeping
- ☐ C. P. A. Coaching
- ☐ Business English
- ☐ Commercial Spanish
- ☐ Effective Speaking

Name ....

Present Position...

Address..

Genuine BAYER

ASPIRIN

SAY "BAYER ASPIRIN" and INSIST!

Proved safe by millions and prescribed by physicians for

Headache Neuralgia Colds Lumbago
Pain Toothache Neuritis Rheumatism

Safe → Accept only "Bayer" package which contains proven directions.
Handy "Bayer" boxes of 12 tablets
Also bottles of 24 and 100—Druggists.

Aspirin is the trade mark of Bayer Manufacture of Monoaceticacidester of Salicylicacid

LOFTIS
BROS. & CO. EST'D 1858

DIAMONDS WATCHES
CASH or CREDIT

Send for Catalog

Over 2,000 illustrations of Diamond-set Jewelry, Watches, Wrist Watches, Pearls, Mesh Bags, Silverware, etc. Sent prepaid for your Free Examination. Catalog explains everything. **Satisfaction Guaranteed or Money Refunded.**

RAILROAD WATCHES—Guaranteed to Pass Inspection
HAMILTON No. 992, 21 Jewels, Adjusted to 5 positions. Gold filled 25-Year Case - - - - - - $55
ELGIN'S LATEST RAYMOND, 21 Jewels; 8 Adjustments. Runs 40 hours one winding. Gold filled 20-Year Case $55

LOFTIS BROS. & CO. National Jewelers
Dept. H-224 108 N. State Street, Chicago, Ill.
Stores in Leading Cities

No. 30. Blue White Diamond. Solid 18-k White Gold; $100. Delivered on first payment of $10, then **$2.50 A WEEK**

No. 27. Blue White Diamond. Solid 18-k White Gold; $75. Delivered on first payment of $7.50, then **$1.75 A WEEK**

WRIST WATCH
18-K Solid White Gold, 17 Jewels, **$27.50**
14-K Solid White Gold, 16 Jewels, **$22.50**
Delivered on first payment of $2.75; then $1.00 a week thereafter until paid.

No. 31. Blue White Diamond, Solid 18-k White Gold; $150. Delivered on first payment of $15, then **$3.75 A WEEK**

No. 32. Blue White Diamond, Solid 18-k White Gold; $50. Delivered on first payment of $5.00, then **$1.25 A WEEK**

17 Jewel Elgin Watch
No. 15. Green Gold filled, assorted patterns. Guaranteed 25 years, 12 size, gilt dial, **$30.**
Delivered on first payment of $3.00, then $1.00 a week thereafter until paid.

RADIO FANS — Listen in on WHT every Tuesday night from 7 to 7.30, every Friday night from 10 to 10.30, central standard time. LOFTIS BROS. & CO.'S hour of music

LAW

STUDY AT HOME
Become a lawyer. Legally trained men win high positions and big success in business and public life. Be independent. Greater opportunities now than ever before. Big corporations are headed by men with legal training. Earn
$5,000 to $10,000 Annually
We guide you step by step You can train at home during spare time. Degree of LL.B. conferred. LaSalle students found among practicing attorneys of every state. We furnish all text material, including fourteen-volume Law Library. Low cost, easy terms. Get our valuable 108-page "Law Guide" and "Evidence" books FREE. Send for them NOW.
LaSalle Extension University, Dept. 176-L Chicago
The World's Largest Business Training Institution

CALLOUSES

Quick, safe relief for callouses and burning on bottom of feet.
At drug and shoe stores everywhere

Dr Scholl's Zino-pads

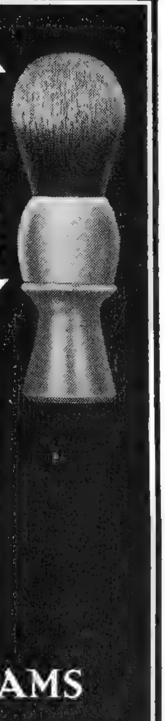
Put one on—the pain is gone

For *Free Sample* write The Scholl Mfg. Co., Chicago

BRISTLES OR BADGER HAIR

When you select a Shaving Brush for its *"business end"* it will of course be a WHITING-ADAMS

VULCAN RUBBER CEMENTED



WHITING-ADAMS Shaving Brushes are made from selected bristles and Badger Hair only. The "business end" of every Whiting-Adams brush is full and bushy, carries a copious lather that works in easily and softens the beard quickly. Naturally the bristles "stay put"—that's expected.

Every hair is permanently imbedded in hard rubber—

VULCAN RUBBER CEMENTED

WHITING-ADAMS
BOSTON
Brush Manufacturers for 117 years and the largest in the World

Your Choice

$20.00

Musical Instruments

FREE TO OUR STUDENTS

Your choice of a Violin, Tenor Banjo, Hawaiian Guitar, Banjo, Cornet, Ukulele, Banjo Ukulele, Guitar, Mandolin or Banjo Mandolin. You will be proud to own any one of these instruments and you can have one absolutely **free.** A few cents a day for lessons is your only expense. Our system of teaching is so easy that you can play several pieces by note with the first four lessons. We guarantee success or no charge. Instrument and lessons sent on **one week's free trial.** Write for booklet today, no obligation.

CHICAGO CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL OF MUSIC
Orchard and Willow Streets • Dept. 76 • Chicago, Illinois

Seal Rupture With a Quarter

Now you can throw away forever steel bands, chafing leg straps and other heavy makeshift devices. For a well known American scientist has found a new easy way to support rupture assisted by means of a wonderful little invention weighing less than 1-25 of an ounce. Not only do you do away with the objectionable pressure and tight strapping, but you eliminate the "coming down" of rupture—when running, straining, exercising, sneezing, etc.—which too frequently leads to strangulation. So great has been the success of this wonderful device that it is being offered to ruptured people for Free inspection. Simply drop a postcard or letter requesting free literature to **New Science Institute, 6620 Clay St., Steubenville, O.**

What Will You Be Doing One Year From Today?

Three hundred and sixty-five days from now—what?

Will you still be struggling along in the same old job at the same old salary—worried about the future—never quite able to make both ends meet—standing still while other men go ahead?

One year from today will you still be putting off your start toward success—thrilled with ambition one moment and then cold the next—delaying, waiting, fiddling away the precious hours that will never come again?

Don't do it, man—don't do it.

There is no greater tragedy in the world than that of a man who stays in the rut all his life, when with just a little effort he could bring large success within his grasp.

Make up your mind today that you're going to train yourself to do some one thing well. Choose the work you like best in the list below, mark an X beside it, mail the coupon to Scranton, and without cost or obligation, at least get the full story of what the I. C. S. can do for you.

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
Box 2023-E, Scranton, Penna.

Without cost or obligation, please tell me how I can qualify for the position or in the subject *before* which I have marked an X:

BUSINESS TRAINING COURSES

☐ Business Management
☐ Industrial Management
☐ Personnel Organization
☐ Traffic Management
☐ Business Law
☐ Banking and Banking Law
☐ Accountancy (including C.P.A.)
☐ Nicholson Cost Accounting
☐ Bookkeeping
☐ Private Secretary
☐ Spanish ☐ French
☐ Salesmanship
☐ Advertising
☐ Better Letters
☐ Show Card Lettering
☐ Stenography and Typing
☐ Business English
☐ Civil Service
☐ Railway Mail Clerk
☐ Common School Subjects
☐ High School Subjects
☐ Illustrating ☐ Cartooning

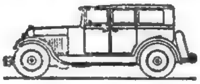
TECHNICAL AND INDUSTRIAL COURSES

☐ Electrical Engineering
☐ Electric Lighting
☐ Mechanical Engineer
☐ Mechanical Draftsman
☐ Machine Shop Practice
☐ Railroad Positions
☐ Gas Engine Operating
☐ Civil Engineer
☐ Surveying and Mapping
☐ Metallurgy
☐ Steam Engineering
☐ Radio
☐ Architect
☐ Architects' Blueprints
☐ Contractor and Builder
☐ Architectural Draftsman
☐ Concrete Builder
☐ Structural Engineer
☐ Chemistry ☐ Pharmacy
☐ Automobile Work
☐ Airplane Engines
☐ Navigation
☐ Agriculture and Poultry
☐ Mathematics

Name...
Street Address.. 3-6-24
City..................................State..............................
Occupation..

Persons residing in Canada should send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada.

Can You Fix It?



Repair any auto fault, learn how NOW. You can do it easily in this new simple way.

These FIVE Big Books are up to the minute on automobile engineering subjects; chock full of little known facts about construction, operation and repairs. Electric wiring treated in complete detail—illustrations and diagrams make everything clear and easily understood by anybody. The most interesting and most practical set of books ever written on modern automobile engineering. Whether you want to fit yourself for garage owner repair expert or merely wish to know more about your own car, you will realize the value of these splendidly bound volumes.

No Money Offer

An amazing new plan of distribution brings these books to you for examination without one cent of payment to us. We don't ask a penny of you, but ship the books to you FREE. Look them over—read them as much as you want to; note the splendid photographs and drawings and then if you decide you want them, send us $2.00; then only $3.00 a month until only $19.80 is paid. That is all; nothing more to pay us. If you send NOW we will include

Consulting Membership FREE

Yes, we actually give you a certificate which entitles you to free consultation on any subject related to automobile repairing. 18 specialized experts are at your disposal—ready at any time to help you. With this library and this consultation membership you ought to be able to soon know all there is to be known about autos. Don't miss this special offer. SEND NOW.

AMERICAN TECHNICAL SOCIETY
Automobile Division, A 126, Chicago, Ill.

You may send me your complete Automobile Engineering library, 5 big volumes bound in flexo covers, with the understanding that I am to have ten days to decide if I want to keep them. I will either return them then or send you $2.00 then and $3.00 per month until the special low price of only $19.80 is paid.

Name ....

Address ....

City .... State ....

Reference ....

Learn ELECTRICITY in Great Shops of COYNE

All practical, personal training. No books or useless theory. You don't need education or experience. Earn while you learn.

Electrical Experts Earn $60 to $200 a Week

Complete course in 3 months. Send for Big FREE BOOK of 151 electrical photos. Ask about 2 Big Special FREE Courses.

COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL
Dept. 1411 1300-10 W. Harrison Street, Chicago

CLASS RINGS & PINS

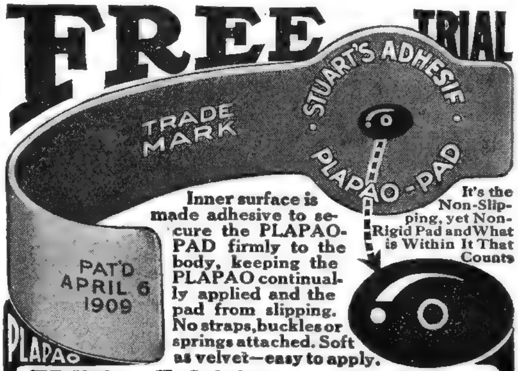
Largest Catalog Issued—FREE

Samples loaned class officers. Prices $.20 to $8.00 each. No order for class, society, club emblems too large or too small. Special designs made on request.

METAL ARTS CO., Inc., 7724 South Ave., Rochester, N. Y.

STOP USING A TRUSS

Do Away With Steel And Rubber Bands



Inner surface is made adhesive to secure the PLAPAO-PAD firmly to the body, keeping the PLAPAO continually applied and the pad from slipping. No straps, buckles or springs attached. Soft as velvet—easy to apply.

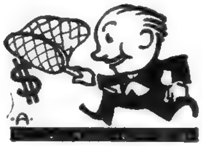
It's the Non-Slipping, yet Non-Rigid Pad and What is Within It That Counts

FREE to 5,000 Truss Sufferers

To the extent of 5,000 Sufferers who may apply, I will send, ABSOLUTELY FREE, a sufficient quantity of the Plapao to positively convince them that this is the only logical, common-sense way of treating rupture. Plapao is a highly astringent medication placed within the Plapao-Pad and being absorbed through the skin, creates a wonderful feeling of relief and at the same time tends to strengthen the weakened muscles and thus permanently close the rupture opening. The process of recovery is natural, so you'll have no use for a truss—you can throw it away forever! Old and young have testified under oath that the Plapao-Pads cured their rupture—many of them long-standing, aggravated cases—without delay from work. Patent allowed in U. S. and foreign countries. Awarded Gold Medal at Rome and Grand Prix at Paris.

Send No Money—for a sufficient quantity of the Plapao is sent without charge to enable you to give it a thorough test; you pay nothing for this trial now or ever Write for it and full information today. Address
Plapao Laboratories, Block 412 St. Louis, Mo.

Don't Chase Dollars



We'll Make Them Roll Your Way

Right now you can have all the extra money you need. You can meet your expenses, and in addition have enough left over to buy those things you long for.

You can do all this, in your spare time, by becoming a special subscription representative for *Adventure* and our other three leading magazines. Thousands of busy men are earning from $10 to $50 a month in this way.

No experience is necessary. We furnish all supplies free of charge. Clip, sign and mail the coupon NOW.

Box 5037, Adventure
Spring and Macdougal Streets
New York City, N. Y.

Please send me full particulars of your money-making plan. I want dollars to roll my way.

Name ....

Street ....

City .... State ....

Earn Big Money! Learn *the* Automobile Business

PUT YOUR NAME HERE

Every ambitious fellow looks forward to a real money-making job or a business of his own. Thousands have **made their dreams come true,** with this school's help. All over the world garages and service stations bear the names of our graduates. Each shows what **ambition** can do, backed with "Michigan State" (Detroit) training. It can do the same for **you.**

YOUR OWN
GARAGE AND SERVICE STATION
AUTO, TRUCK AND TRACTOR REPAIRING
OXY-ACETYLENE WELDING — EXPERT TIRE REPAIRING
OFFICE

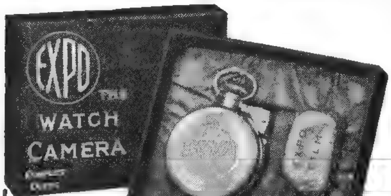
Be a Trained Man!

Think of the repair work on 18 million cars. Unlimited opportunities for men who **know** this business right. Engines, electric systems, batteries, tires, to be repaired. Welding and machine shops needed. Age, education or experience make no difference. You can be successful too,—independent. Get M. S. A. S. training **now!**

Come to Detroit Now!

Get practical training at this great School. Thorough courses, complete equipment, expert instructors. Auto factories endorse our methods. Write today for Chart of Courses, and photogravure book about Detroit. Say whether you want to start your training at home or at our school in Detroit. Address A. G. Zeller, President.

Michigan State Automobile School
2441 Auto Building Detroit, Mich.



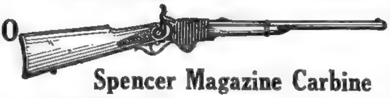
Unusual Christmas Gift!

$5 complete

Watch shaped, watch size—yet a real CAMERA, taking sharp, bright pictures. Uses roll film—20 exposures for 30c. Camera, finder and film in gift case $5. Guaranteed ten years. At all good dealers. If your dealer can't supply you, write us direct.

EXPO CAMERA CORPORATION
M. C. Gennert, Pres. 24 East 13th Street, N. Y. C.

$4.50



Spencer Magazine Carbine

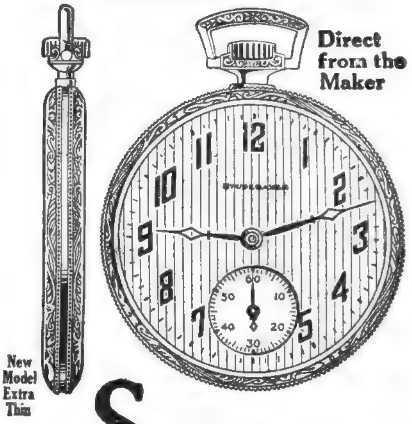
Lever action, 5 shot, caliber 50 rim fire. Weight 7 lbs. 37 inches long; barrel 20 inch; in good order. **Price, $4.50 each.** Ball cartridges $1.50 per 100. **15 Acres Army Goods, New Catalog 1925, 60th Anniversary** issue, 372 pages, fully illustrated, contains pictures and information of all American military guns and pistols since 1775, also rifles, revolvers, uniforms, tents, knapsacks, saddles, war medals, etc. Mailed 50c stamps. **Special New Circular** for 2c stamp. Est. 1865.

Francis Bannerman Sons, 501 Bdway, New York City

Want an Extra $50?

Become a representative for *Adventure* and our other three big magazines. Full particulars sent free on request. **Box 5036. Adventure, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City, N. Y.**

21 Jewel ~ Extra thin
STUDEBAKER
The *Insured* Watch



SENT FOR $1.00 DOWN!

Only $1.00! The balance in easy monthly payments. You get the famous Studebaker 21 Jewel Watch—Insured for a lifetime; a choice of 60 new Art Beauty Cases; 8 adjustments, including heat, cold, isochronism and 5 positions—***direct from the maker*** at lowest prices ever named on equal quality. Write today for FREE BOOK of Advance Watch Styles.

Watch Chain FREE!

For a limited time we are offering a beautiful Watch Chain FREE. Write now while offer lasts.

Mail Coupon for FREE Book

Send at once and get a copy of this book—FREE! See the newest, beautiful, advance styles in Studebaker Art Beauty Cases and Dials. Read how you can buy a 21 Jewel Studebaker Insured Watch direct from the maker—save big money—and pay for it on easy monthly payments.

Write! for our free book. It will post you on watch styles and watch values. Send coupon at once. Get Free Chain offer today while it lasts.

STUDEBAKER WATCH CO.
Dept. E21 South Bend, Indiana
Canadian Address: Windsor, Ontario

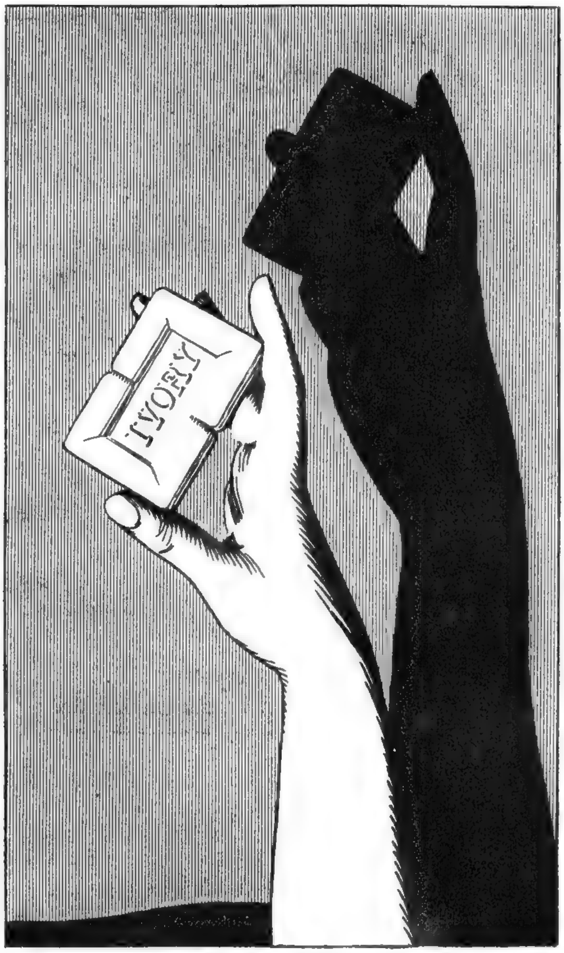
STUDEBAKER WATCH CO.
Dept. E21, South Bend, Indiana

Please send me your Free Book of Advance Watch Styles and particulars of your $1.00 down offer.

Name ....

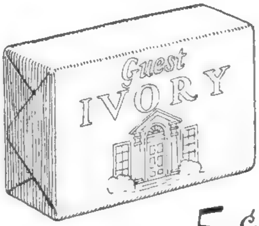
Address ....

City .... *State* ....



This pure and dainty soap for your face in a lovely new form

In *Guest* IVORY, delicately modeled for slim fingers and wrapped in blue for gleaming white bathrooms, we offer you genuine Ivory Soap in the loveliest form imaginable.



5¢

A dollar can buy no finer soap for your face and hands, yet *Guest* IVORY'S modest price is five cents. And you can buy *Guest* IVORY almost anywhere.

PROCTER & GAMBLE

For the face and hands ❧ As fine as soap can be

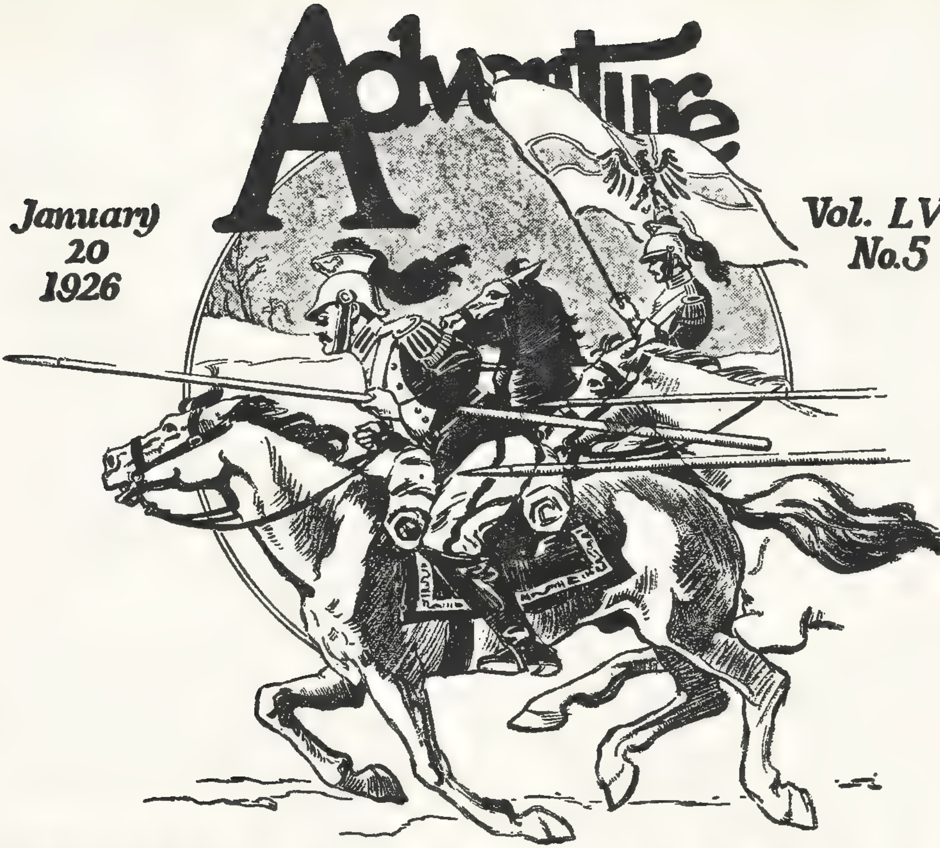
99 44/100% Pure. It Floats

Copyright 1926, by The Procter & Gamble Co., Cincinnati, Ohio

Adventure

January
20
1926

Vol. LVI
No.5



DREGS OF DEFEAT

A Complete Novelette by Georges Surdez

Author of "Sudanese Trails," "The Red Shadow," etc.

UNLESS his ears deceived him, which was a remote possibility, as he was but twenty-four and possessed remarkably efficient organs, he had heard the faint clicking of hoofs upon the frozen surface of the road. The sound was still far off, in the general direction of Vesoul.

In the late days of 1870, on the highways of Eastern France, and especially in this particular region, horses were likely to carry Prussian Uhlans or Hussars, breeds of men that Alfred Darlay had good reason to shun.

Under the hooded greatcoat protecting him from the bitter cold, Darlay wore the gray trousers and dark tunic of the *Mobiles*, the militia called to arms after the regular armies of France had met defeat in the fields of Alsace, or had been penned up within the walls of Metz. A military belt was buckled over a broad woolen sash which molded his waist. From this belt hung a loaded revolver. Discovered in such attire, far from the nearest French force, Darlay ran considerable risk from a carbine bullet, without further inquiry. At best, he would be made prisoner.

He had tasted of concentration camps after the surrender at Sedan, and it was not likely that he would succeed in escaping from the Germans a second time. Also, he

Copyright, 1925, by the Ridgway Company in the United States and Great Britain. All rights reserved.

carrried papers of importance, and was on a mission that might mean a great deal to him and to the corps operating in the region between Langres and Vesoul.

Had he been certain of but one rider, his desire for action might have remained uppermost, and he would have stood his ground. But the German riders seldom traveled save in a body, and he decided upon the safe course. In one leap he crossed the ditch, scrambled up the embankment and found shelter beneath a snow-covered bush.

In his haste he sprawled headlong. He wiped the frozen particles from the dawning beard on his cheeks, from his brows. The protruding bony structure of the face, a face thin to the point of emaciation, revealed that of late his life had not been one of ease. The light blue eyes, which seemed to catch something of the white of the snowy fields and something of the somberness of the sky, were resolute, but softened by some inner emotion.

He was finding it bitter to be in his homeland, in his country's uniform, and forced to hide. The humiliation of France's defeat had never struck him as forcibly as now. Three months before, when he had stacked his rifle with thousands of others, after the Sedan débâcle, his personal feelings had been lost in the shame of an immense aggregation. But now, when the hoof-beats of a German's horse on the road he had followed to school for many years drove him into concealment, his shame was keen. He was alone to bear the ordeal. Within him stirred an unreasoning blind hatred. His fingers closed on the butt of the revolver.

Behind him the forest and fields were silent. The wolves, claimed by popular legend to have followed the German invasion from the depths of the Black Forest, had not yet begun their nightly concert. The snow, which had fallen steadily throughout the day, was falling with the coming of twilight. Great flakes still floated lazily out of the black sky. At each gust of the icy wind the tree branches creaked, and tiny avalanches slid noiselessly to the deep drifts below.

The chimes of the neighboring villages suddenly rang out, with clear, prolonged echoes of bronze. They seemed very near, for sound carried far in the crisp air. Darlay was able to identify each steeple. There was Combeaufontaine; the other was Port-sur-Saone. And, much nearer, the bell of Echezbeau, his birthplace, pealed solemnly. How strange it was to hear those utterly familiar rings, mingling with the noise on the road, now quite near—hoof beats and the clang of steel, doubtless a rattling saber.

He lifted himself on his elbows, his broad shoulders a few inches above the snow, and peered at the road. Suddenly he laughed, a short, self derisive chuckle.

A peddler's cart had rounded the bend of the highway.

It was drawn by an ancient mare, a bag of bones, unfit for any other service. The blanket covering the thin flanks, where ribs protruded like barrel hoops, was dingy, ragged. Hardware, rattling in the body of the cart, had to his intense imagination, supplied the rattling of the saber.

The peddler, a young man, Darlay noticed with surprize, was hunched on the seat, holding the reins listlessly between gloved fingers. A pipe was suspended from his lips, and the tobacco smoke mingled in a blue haze with the vapor of his breathing. His nose was moist and red, and altogether he was far from warlike.

Darlay slid down the embankment in a cloud of flying snow and nimbly leaped to the center of the road. Startled, the driver reached for the whip in the socket at his right, with an instinctive gesture toward the nearest object that might be used as a weapon.

"Good evening," Darlay called out.

"Good evening, yourself," the peddler answered. "You gave me a scare!"

"Which merely evens things up," Darlay declared. "I mistook your horse and your tinware for a whole squadron of Uhlans." He glanced at the man's face but did not recognize him. "You're not from this part, are you?"

"No. I'm Alsatian. But I've been around here a few days."

"Could you tell me if the Darlay farm is occupied by the Prussians?"

"Darlay?" repeated the peddler. "I don't know the name."

"A big farm, about a mile from here, on the right as you drive up. Red-tiled roof, closed yard, an orchard between it and the road. Can't miss seeing it."

"I just sold the boss some kitchen things. No, there are no Prussians there."

"The boss? How is he?"

"All right, as far as I could see. Friend of yours?"

"Used to know him."

The peddler nodded.

"Going far?" he asked. "Pretty bad traveling, on foot."

DARLAY opened his greatcoat, revealed his uniform. The peddler started violently and glanced about furtively.

"You know what I'm looking for," explained Darlay. "Do you know where they are?"

"The Raiders?"

"Yes. The *Francs-Tireurs*."

The peddler straightened up, indicated the fields and woods with a sweeping gesture.

"All over," he said.

He gathered the reins, obviously unwilling to continue the conversation. But Darlay saw a chance to obtain information from this man who traveled over the enemies' lines, and probably was not blind to what was going on.

"Before you go," he asked, "could you tell me if I'm likely to meet a Uhlan patrol around this time?"

"No. I saw the last patrol coming back into Echezbeau when I left there."

"Many Prussians in the village?"

"I don't know exactly," the peddler replied with a shrug. "Seems like a lot, because there's more of them than there are inhabitants. Baden infantry, the majority. A few Hussars, a few Uhlans."

"And elsewhere?"

"A lot in Port-sur-Saone. And ten or twelve thousand in Vesoul. General Von Werder has his headquarters there."

"Cocky lot, eh? Think they've got us licked?"

"I can't say that. The discipline is harsh, and the privates don't talk. As for the officers, they don't talk to men like me."

"Do they seem to be tired of the war?"

"Can't say that," the peddler repeated. "The hospital is full in Vesoul. A few wounded men, from the skirmish line north of here, and others potted by the Raiders. But mostly sick cases, typhus."

"Thanks," said Darlay.

"Good-by," said the peddler. He laid the whip on the mare's back. Darlay stepped aside to allow the cart to go by. He walked ahead, and when he turned back, the peddler and his cart were disappearing up the road.

Darlay shook his head thoughtfully. That peddler was a young man, and not in the army. Also, he was traveling in a region where his life was at the discretion of a suspicious patrol. But the greed for money is strong in some men. The very nature that would allow him to stand by and see France invaded without picking up a rifle was very likely to be touched by the prospect of a few thousand francs to be gathered while more timid tradesmen awaited the end of hostilities.

The fellow was well informed, almost too well informed. His pretended ignorance, followed by his estimate of the troops in Vesoul, and the fact that he had noticed the number of men in the hospital hinted that he might be a French spy. But what was there to fear from a Frenchman, an Alsatian?

He strode swiftly down the road. His naturally gay spirit asserted itself, and he whistled softly in time to his steps.

Things were going as well as he could wish, far better than he had feared. To others, his plan to pass through the German lines in full uniform had seemed mad. It would have been impossible to a man who did not know the trails through the woods. He pointed out that if arrested, even in civilian garb, his papers would be seized. The patrols stopped every one they saw. So he had as good a chance to get by in uniform. The main object was to remain unseen by the Germans. In case he was captured, in uniform, he would be tried, and at the worst, shot. In peasant attire he would be strung to the nearest branch upon discovery of the letters he bore. Darlay preferred a bullet to a rope. He was willing to die, but by the road of his choice.

The hardest part of his journey was completed. In a few minutes he would be at his brother's farm, before night had fallen completely. There, he could remain in hiding until his relative located the Raiders, and he could join them. The prospect of a bowl of steaming potato soup and a soft bed held nothing unpleasant after the long march from the French outposts.

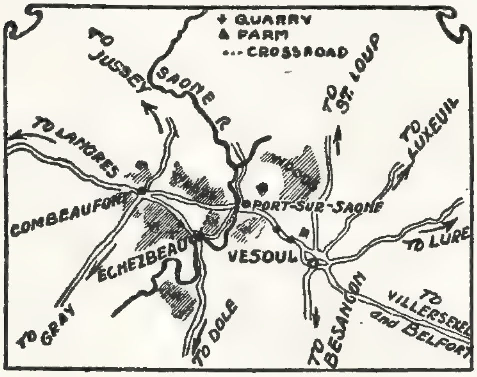
He relaxed completely. Reaching in his pocket, he located paper and tobacco, and rolled a cigaret. The chimes had stopped ringing, and not a sound disturbed the stillness. Save—he listened, forming a cup of his right hand behind his ear.

"Another peddler?" he murmured. "Not likely."

He could not be mistaken this time. The hoofs rang sharp, with an undertone of jingling metal. To dispel his last doubt, a guttural order floated to him. He shrugged in disgust, threw the cigaret into the snow, stamped it out of sight. And for the second time he ascended the embankment and stretched out full length beneath a bush.

He did not have to wait long. The patrol appeared.

It was composed of ten or twelve Hussars. The snow-sprinkled fur bonnets with the yellow trimming, the brown tunics braided in orange, the long-limbed, slender horses, formed a patch-work of vivid colors against the snow.



The Hussars progressed at a slow trot. Each man rested the butt of his carbine on the right thigh, finger on the trigger. They appeared nervous, and their eyes roamed constantly from one side of the road to the other. The officer in charge, a blond, red-cheeked fellow, twenty at the most, held a pistol ready. As he scanned the bushes, he grinned convulsively. His chin was held high, his shoulders thrown back. Doubtless he was thinking of those other patrol officers, dropped by a bullet from nowhere. He knew what might happen—the dry crack of a Chassepot rifle, smoke shredding slowly through the bushes and himself sprawling, face buried in bloody snow.

Not fifteen yards from Darlay he halted his horse and looked down at the ground. His men crowded close, and exchanged a few words with him. The officer pointed to the bushes where the Frenchman was hidden. Darlay saw with a start that he had left tracks in the snow of the embankment, as was unavoidable. It was now a question whether the blond youth should decide if the tracks were or were not recent. Darlay had not come thus far to give up without a struggle. If they came too near, he would fire with the revolver, then attempt to escape through the woods. He half drew his revolver from the holster.

There appeared to be an argument concerning the course to be followed, a sure indication that the young officer did not have his men well in hand.

Eventually one of the Hussars urged his horse up the embankment and, leaning forward in his saddle, strove to follow the tracks with his glance. He was very near. Manifestly he was but obeying orders, and just as plainly not enjoying himself, exposed as he was to possible snipers. In spite of the cold, perspiration streamed down his face, and the flesh on his cheeks quivered.

* * *

HE REMAINED on watch for perhaps two minutes, an interminable time to Darlay. Then he backed his mount upon the road once more, and reported, saluting as he did so. The officer shrugged, seemed to hesitate. At length he lifted his hand in a casual wave, and the patrol trotted on toward Combeaufontaine between the wheel ruts left by the peddler's cart.

A well informed gentleman, that peddler! Trusting to his word that the last patrol had left the road, Darlay had almost run headlong into these fellows.

"The slobs!" Darlay grumbled, to the universe at large.

He was indignant to see these men using the French roads as if they owned the country. And he rejoiced, that in spite of their arrogance, they felt far from safe. The generations of peasant ancestors behind Darlay told. The sight of foreigners, men from over the Rhine, who spoke a language not his own, so near the fields his family had owned for centuries, was unbearable.

When the Hussars had vanished, he rose to his feet, brushed his clothing, and made ready to start, hoping this time to reach the end of his journey without further incident.

He was about to gain the road, when he felt a hand on his shoulder.

"Close call, that time, young fellow!" said some one, in French.

Darlay, immensely relieved, faced the speaker.

"Yes—I should have thought of the tracks."

The man nodded.

He was tall and thin, thirty-eight or forty, dressed in a comical arrangement of civilian and military garments. A felt hat with a green feather planted in the band, one brim turned up, shaded a weather-beaten face, sliced in two by a long black mustache. Around the shooting-coat of coarse material a belt supporting a cartridge-pouch and a brass-handled saber of the sort nicknamed "cabbage-cutter" was fastened. The legs were swathed in sack-cloth, tied securely with string. A well kept Chassepot rifle completed the bizarre equipment.

"Where were you?" Darlay asked.

"Not fifteen paces away," replied the other. "I was waiting for that young officer. But when you came I thought you might not be able to beat it through the woods as I could, and I knew those fellows would hack you into mince-meat if that cute officer was killed. So, I put off until tomorrow what I should have done today." He sighed regretfully. Then he added, abruptly, "Why are you dodging them? You're not one of us."

Darlay showed his uniform.

"Are you crazy?" the man asked gently.

"Not as much as you'd think. You're a *Franc-Tireur?*"

The man opened his mouth in mock astonishment—

"How did you guess!"

"Do you belong by any chance to the Night-Raiders?"

"I have the honor."

"I am a lieutenant of *Mobiles.*"

"So I judge."

"I came down here from Langres to join you."

"You did, eh?" the *Franc-Tireur* said, his face losing the good humored smile.

"Who is your captain?" Darlay asked.

"If you mean our chief, I'll take you to him."

"What's his name?" Darlay insisted drily.

The man looked at him quietly:

"You want to know too much too soon," he drawled. He bruskly brought his rifle to bear on Darlay:

"Hand me that tool you were fooling with. Your yarn sounds queer to me."

Darlay took his revolver from the holster and offered it. Protest at this time would add to suspicion.

"By the barrel," suggested the other, waving the muzzle of the Chassepot meaningly. He took the revolver in his left hand and, dropped it in one of the big pockets of his coat. "Now, walk ahead. No tricks now. You don't look like a cripple, so don't hang too near me. The chief will talk to you."

He motioned to Darlay to go forward into the woods and followed him, talking as he walked.

"Thought you were clever? Running away from a Prussian patrol? Like ——! And what did you talk about with the peddler, eh? No, not that way. Turn to the left and strike between those two trees—that one with the busted branch. Right. You'll see him again, the peddler. Our boys will get him as soon as the patrol is out of hearing."

Darlay thought he remembered the face of his captor, a man from the vicinity. He tried to recall the name, thinking to be able to continue the trip under less hostile conditions.

"You're Saraud, from La Quarte hamlet?"

The man showed no particular surprize:

"You know me? Now, try to get away!"

"I know you because I was brought up around here. I'm Darlay, Jules Darlay's brother."

"You picked the wrong man. He was killed."

"No, I wasn't. I'm here."

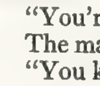
"What regiment were you with, then?"

"Seventy-fourth of the line."

"Correct number. But it was all over the village that Darlay's brother had been killed on August fourth."

"I have papers—"

"Listen—" Saraud interrupted him—"if you claimed to be Jeanne d' Arc's nephew, I wouldn't let you go. Hurry up, it's getting dark."



THE sun had disappeared. Light still clung to the snow, a vague yellowish glow, mournful, sinister, that increased the loneliness.

Walking ahead of the Raider, Alfred Darlay recognized landmarks once familiar. He felt like a man turning the pages of a book read long ago and forgotten for many years. A rise of soil, discerned under the thick snow blanket, a crooked tree, a boulder, evoked scenes that had dropped from his memory.

Auguste Darlay, his father, had brought

up six children, three boys and three girls. Not a very large family in the region. Alfred was the youngest.

When he was nine, the eldest of the brothers, named after the father, Auguste, was called into the army. He entered the cavalry and, after a short stay in France, was transferred to Algeria to the famous *Chasseurs d'Afrique*. The second brother, Jules, a year younger, was to have gone very soon after. But Jules felt not the lure of the uniform. Perhaps, with the older lad gone, with the father beginning to age, he enjoyed the sense of power he exercised as second in command at the farm.

He therefore had asked his father to procure for him a substitute, to serve the seven years that France demanded from her sons. The old man paid a few thousand francs, and Jules was free from service for all time.

The three girls married before their nineteenth or twentieth birthdays. It was the custom. One went to live in Vesoul, the capital of the Department; the others settled in near-by villages.

Alfred was to be the privileged character. He was sent to school to become a lawyer. When he was fifteen he came home on a vacation. His oldest brother, the *Chasseur*, had come home also. Since Alfred had last seen him he had won a medal and the stripes of sergeant on the fields of Italy in the war against Austria. In sky-blue tunic and red trousers, booted and spurred, he was a striking figure. His face, bronzed by the sun of Northern Africa, revealed the slash of a saber from brow to chin. The medal on his left breast always aroused admiration when he strode through the village. Proud as was Alfred of the soldier, the soldier was in turn proud of Alfred, who, he seemed to think, spoke Latin and Greek as well as the normal man spoke *patois*.

Against parental advice, the *Chasseur* took the boy to the tap-room of the village inn, and there, among other veterans, Alfred sipped his blackberry syrup, cut by a small dose of brandy. The tales narrated reeked of powder, sparkled with the lines of bayonets advancing through the fields.

The brother left to join his regiment and go to Mexico, where the French emperor was striving to establish an Austrian-born monarch. He wrote Alfred short, ill-spelled letters which went to the boy's head like old wine.

At sixteen, in appearance and behavior Alfred seemed a grown man. His mental powers had kept pace with his physical growth. He was strong enough and possessed sufficient education to have a good opportunity for advancement in the army. Starting young, he reasoned with the superb self-confidence of adolescence that there was no reason why he could not attain one of the highest ranks. Had not Hoche and Marceau commanded armies at twenty-six?

When he informed his father of the plan, the old man was chagrined, but contented himself with advising Alfred to wait. Alfred insisted that waiting would be merely a waste of time—Auguste, he had just learned, was a second lieutenant. And he had entered at twenty-one. With nearly five years start and with the educational groundwork, Alfred at his age would be a colonel. That much was clear.

He had almost won his point when bad news arrived from Mexico.

Auguste had been shot through the head by a guerilla. Quite naturally, he was dead. Both father and mother declared that one son buried on foreign soil was enough for any family. The refusal was definite. Alfred knew better than to pit himself against the stubborn old man and the weeping entreaties of his mother. He endured the inaction as long as he could, came to the conclusion that the older a man became the more his decisions would conflict with the opinions of his relatives, and decided to face them with the accomplished fact.

He ran away.

He wrote home from Algeria, where he was a private in the Zouaves. His father refused to forgive him for two years. But when the mother died suddenly, in the upheaval following, the old man relented. Alfred could not obtain leave in time to go home and see him. The next news he received was that his father was dead. As he had never been extremely intimate with Jules or his sisters, who were always busy with their own affairs, he stayed where he was, and worked for promotion. At twenty-two he was but a sergeant-major. And as a sergeant-major, just before the opening of the Franco-Prussian War, he was transferred to the Seventy-Fourth of the Line, which he joined in Alsace.

The Seventy-Fourth was part of the Douay division, which was detailed by MacMahon, commanding the French Army of the Rhine, to cover Wissenburg on the Palatinate frontier. On the fourth of August the Germans attacked. The issue was never in doubt. A division against several army corps could not hope to win out.

Alfred, who had implicitly believed in the supremacy of the French on the battlefield, was roughly awakened. The Bavarians and Prussians were far from the easy-going, loutish fellows they had been pictured in France. They advanced with magnificent valor, the officers well ahead, conspicuous with the silver sash about the waist, the flat drums throbbing, and flags flying.

More than their courage, their superb organization amazed Alfred. The few pieces of artillery on the French side were silenced immediately. True, when the fighting became a bayonet struggle, and the odds were anything like even, the wiry Turcos from the hills of Kabylia swept through the enemy. But there were too many Prussians and Bavarians. Alfred's battalion retreated to the Geissberg Castle. There was still hope at that time that the remainder of the First French Corps, and also the Fifth, would arrive. Those men, so accustomed to victory, could not believe in their ultimate defeat.

LIKE the others, Alfred was compelled to admiration by the splendid will-to-win of the Germans. He saw a battle flag, that of a Prussian grenadier regiment, falling and rising, each time held aloft by a new flag-bearer. The grenadiers were mowed down in heaps.

Hours passed and no sign of help for the French. The fall of the Geissberg Castle was near. Unwilling to be made prisoners, a handful of survivors gathered about Major Cecille, to hack a path through the attackers, and gain the road of retreat.

Cecille fell. Alfred Darlay escaped, with two or three others, and ran down the slope to join the fragments of the First Turco. He followed that unit to the defensive positions along the Sauerbach River. He felt sure that this defeat was merely a bad start.

But Froeschwiller followed—another defeat—with the outnumbered French army still waiting for assistance. Alfred lost his cheerfulness. He was sullen, uncomprehending. What was wrong? Why were the French outnumbered? Why were the army corps not massed in the threatened region? Why the foolish waste of lives? Why put thirty thousand men against one hundred thousand? Why had the German artillery breech-loading cannon, while the French still employed a system dating back to the beginning of the century?

"Wait until Marshal Bazaine joins us," said the officers. A few weeks later, at Sedan, the French were still waiting for Bazaine—and the Germans came. Alfred witnessed another defeat, probably the most stupid, the worst ever inflicted upon any army. It seemed that a schoolboy could have out-maneuvered the French general. Napoleon III had nothing of his illustrious uncle save the name. The French had only one thing, and that was courage. But courage is not the only thing needed to win.

Alfred Darlay, in a stupefied line of soldiers who had asked nothing better than a chance to fight, a chance to die, had to give up his arms. Many thought the war was over. He did not. So, at the first occasion, he made off, and gained Langres. Here forces were being organized. With his military experience, Alfred seemed a valuable man. He was promoted to lieutenant in the *Mobiles*. But nothing was being done. The Germans were flooding France. He became irritated at idleness when action was in demand.

There was talk in Langres about the Night-Raiders, a band of irregulars operating against the troops of occupation. They were obviously daring fellows. They acted in the immediate vicinity of Alfred's home. Darlay went to his commanding officer, pointed out that if the Raiders were led by an officer, they might do more than cut down sentries and harass patrols. He offered himself as the man and was accepted.

BEHIND him he heard a sharp exclamation, the sound of a fall. He turned and saw that Saraud had slipped on a concealed stone. Rifle flying one way, hat another, he lay sprawled out, his face smirched with muddy snow. Darlay saw an opportunity to make his loyal intentions clear. He helped the Raider to his feet and handed him the Chassepot.

"Hurt?"

"No—" Saraud hesitated. "I guess you're all right. We'll walk together."

Then he resumed. "A dog's life, this. No decent food. No bed. Nothing."

"What keeps you from going home to your farm?"

Saraud pondered over the question, analyzing his reasons.

"It's this way: There's no reason, and yet there is. It ain't a thing you can put down on a table and look over. You just go ahead and do it without thinking. Makes your blood turn sour to have those Prussians around here, and you want them to know it."

"We've been in their homeland before," Darlay suggested. "And we'll be again, let's hope."

"Then I guess we stank to them, too. I don't blame them for shooting us down, then. When the fellows who come into your land are too strong to lick in the open, any man with guts will go out with a rifle, or a pitchfork, or anything."

"That's right," Darlay agreed.

"For instance, I was mad at you mostly for one thing—I had promised myself to get that fresh lad of a Hussar."

"Why that young officer in particular?" Darlay wondered. "He's a nice boy, doing his duty."

"Nice? He's a ——! He got one of our boys the other day, and he and his bunch hung him by the heels and used him for a target. He's cruel—that's what he is." Saraud breathed heavily. "——! How I'd like to nail him to a barn door to scare the others!"

"The man he tortured was your friend?"

"No. A farm-hand named Vioux. Kind of useless fellow, before the war. Drank a lot, and folks said he'd be wrecked and die of it. He fooled them, didn't he? Believe me, his hand didn't shake when he held a gun. Wherever the poor —— sot went to, he has plenty of company he invited himself."

Darlay and Saraud were now walking abreast on a narrow trail where the footing was secure. Darlay was fascinated by these tales of war, so different from the war he knew.

Saraud talked on—and on.

He was interrupted by a tremulous howl, which was answered by several others.

"Wolves—" he said.

"Heard them last night. They're all over, aren't they?"

"Yes. They're nothing for a man to meet, but I guess they'd attack a kid. See, there's one, that kind of gray patch, with the sparklers." He stretched out his hand, indicating a shadow pierced by glowing spots of red. "The men are so mean about here, I almost like the wolves. After all, a wolf is nothing but a wild dog living in the woods. We are men who live in the woods. So I guess we're related. That's what the Prussians calls us—wolves." He laughed.

"Say, they don't dare leave the roads daytimes. At night you can't coax them out of the villages. At first we got a few that way who came and explored. Lone sentries, or men who came out after dark to get water. But now, if they hear a cat stepping softly on a feather bed, they're awake. The sentry yells, '*Heraus!*' and they tumble out with fixed bayonets. Sometimes, just to keep them awake, we fire a shot during the night, and they stay up, shivering in the cold."

Out of the fast darkening forest came a hail. Saraud halted and whistled in a particular tone.

"Come ahead!"

Twenty yards farther a tall shape detached itself from a near tree and came forward.

"Who's that with you?"

"Man to see the chief. Says he's an officer."

"Then what the —— is he doing here?" said the sentry. Then he apologized quickly, "That's none of my business, after all. Go on."

Perhaps two hundred yards from the sentry, Saraud led the way into a cleft of soil, which Darlay recognized suddenly as a sort of stone quarry, where peasants obtained their material for dividing walls. Had he given the situation serious thought, he would have decided that this was the spot for a partisan band to hide.

Sheltered from the wind, one side of the ravine clear of snow, the smoke of the fires would not rise straight into the sky and serve as an indication to enemy scouts. In fact, there were several small fires blazing. Men were lying about, or were seated playing cards. They looked up casually at the new arrivals, then went on with their various occupations.

One of the number, who had evidently been lucky that day, was exhibiting a spiked helmet. He turned to Saraud.

"Well, did you get Fritzel?"

Saraud shook his head. Darlay perceived that his intention to shoot the young officer had been proclaimed, and saw in this the reason for the Raider's anger at missing his chance after boasting of his plan.

"Where's the chief?" Saraud inquired.

"Not back yet. He went for the peddler. Should bring him back soon."

Saraud helped himself to a thick piece of bacon, a piece of hard bread and coffee. He hesitated, then offered half of his ration to Darlay, who accepted. As he munched the food, he looked about him. The appearance of the men would have been ridiculous, had their errand been less deadly. The majority were over forty. Their dress was not military, and the short sabers against blouse or civilian coat were strangely amusing. It did not seem possible that these quiet fellows held ten times their number of Germans on the alert.

The conversations were similar to those he had heard at the inn. The discussion over card games, the charms of the various girls of the village freely commented upon; the war, of the hostilities around Paris, little mention. They would go on annoying the Prussians as long as they were in the neighborhood. That was their aim—nothing more.

Saraud informed the group near him that Darlay had just arrived from Langres. There was immediately much amusement.

"Well—is the Italian there by this time? How many Prussians has Garibaldi killed? Say, that's a funny thing—our generals weren't good enough to lick the Germans, so they had to bring in that nut. You'll see. He'll do a lot of talking, spend a lot of money—and do nothing."

DARLAY had noticed, even in Langres, a strong resentment against the new government for granting Garibaldi, the Italian partisan, a large command. French troops resented being under the orders of a man who was undeniably a great patriot and a lover of liberty, but whose ability to handle a large body of armed men was in doubt. They had felt, with reason, that France could not be saved from defeat by measures dictated more by sentiment than by good judgment.

"There'll be something doing around Dijon," Darlay assured them. "Von Werder is in a bad position, if we can take advantage of it."

"We'd like to believe it, but we can't—" some one replied.

"All we can expect is another Sedan," said another.

"Listen," Saraud said. "I think some one is coming."

In fact, footsteps resounded on the brink of the cleft, and soon a group of men appeared. Among them walked a familiar figure. As the man passed near the fire, Darlay recognized the peddler he had spoken with on the road.

"Come ahead," invited Saraud. "I'll take you to the chief."

Darlay followed him toward the first of the men who had just arrived.

"Doctor Vieges," said Saraud. "This man claims he is from Langres, and that he's an officer."

The title, doctor, aroused Darlay's interest. He tried to get a square glance at the man's face. Doctor Vieges was a man of medium height, with long arms and legs, and an extraordinarily large head, the head of a giant. His mustache and beard were snow-white. Darlay remembered having seen him many times, both in Vesoul and in his father's home.

The color of his face, probably due to the fact that he had of late been living an outdoor life, was darker, healthier than in previous years. He wore a corduroy suit, such as were worn by gentlemen of means on hunting trips. He wore no sword, no insignia of his rank. The gun he held was a double-barreled shotgun. A soft hat, soiled and misshapen, covered his head, and was pulled low over his eyebrows. These eyes, large and brown, darted swift glances in all directions. The doctor seemed to be looking everywhere at once.

Darlay saluted.

"I bring the salutations of the general," he said, "and letters of introduction to you."

Vieges nodded. He turned to his followers. "Boys, take good care of that rascal. I'll question him later." Then he turned to Darlay. "And those letters, monsieur, may I see them?"

"Of course."

Darlay produced the letters.

Vieges took them and indicated the nearest fire:

"All right. Sit down."

Vieges remained standing, legs wide apart, the hat pushed to the back of his head. With a thumb-nail he ripped the sealed envelope open, unfolded the letters. Alfred noticed that despite his age he did not wear glasses. He cast a casual glance at Darlay's commission, then handed it to the young man.

He read the letters several times, and shrugged.

"I understand," he began gently, "that you come more or less in the capacity of adviser to us, Lieutenant?"

"I come to help within the limits of my ability," corrected Darlay, nettled by the subtle irony in the other's voice.

"You then admit," Vieges went on suavely, "that your ability has limits?"

Darlay flushed—

"All the men have limits, Doctor."

"Quite so. Some wider than others, however." Vieges waited for an answer which did not come. "May I ask, Lieutenant, in what way you pretend to assist me? You are a stranger in the region, know nothing of the country or of us."

"If you had read the name on the commission, Doctor, you might not have misunderstood so completely. I'm Alfred Darlay, the son of Auguste Darlay, the brother of Jules Darlay. I know this vicinity better than you believe to be the case."

Vieges, for the first time, looked at the lieutenant carefully.

"By Jove!" he said. "You are. You don't look unlike your brother, and you might be mistaken for Auguste himself. You were reported killed."

"I escaped." He hesitated a moment. "Am I to understand, Doctor, that you refuse to receive me among your men?"

"Among my men, no. But as a co-leader I refuse absolutely."

"You are going against advice from the military authorities."

"The authorities can, as far as I and my men are concerned, go to the ——. Darlay, if you'll take the advice of a man of my years, you'll retrace your steps to Langres, and play soldier with the others. Military authorities—they know a great deal. Enough to bear a Sedan and a shame and retain sufficient gall to suggest to us, who have accomplished something, what to do." Vieges smiled bitterly. "When I want to know how to lose all sense of honor, when I want to learn the best way to quit before an enemy, I'll listen. You can tell any one you please that there are still Frenchmen who know how to die."

"We all know that," Darlay declared, very pale. "And thousands have proved it. But we're trying to learn to win."

"That's a worthy ambition," Vieges approved. "but comes a trifle late. We're beaten. All that is left is to give those Prussians a good remembrance of our region."

"Doctor, may I stay with you—in any capacity? This is my homeland, too—"

Vieges extended his hand.

"Yes. And your advice will be considered, as every other man's advice is considered among us. But do you realize what you are facing? We are outcasts. The Prussians shoot us without trial. The majority of the peasants dislike us for the reprisals which fall upon them after each blow we strike. They refuse us food. Many refuse us a hiding place when we are pursued. The military authorities of our own land, as you know, want us to turn into a sort of militia. While the sole effect we can have on the Germans can be gained only through going on in our own way."

"I know all that."

"YOU'RE risking the rope. Any day we may be betrayed. But it is as you will." Vieges took a crust of bread and a cup of coffee offered him by Saraud. "That's all settled. Now, if you'll excuse me, I'll have my dinner." He grinned. "One thing is accomplished—not one of us runs danger of indigestion."

"Before engaging in any operation, may I go to see my brother? He lives not far from here."

"You have my permission. But be careful." The doctor passed his hand over his forehead. "We are menaced on all sides. You have been away, and you do not realize. I have a man here who will be questioned. It will give you an idea of the way the Prussians are proceeding against us."

"The peddler? I met him on the road."

"We suspect him of being a spy. We had information from Vesoul."

The doctor clapped his hands together and the band gathered in a circle, fifty or sixty in number.

"We run equal risks and each man has a

voice in whatever is done," the doctor explained.

The peddler was brought forward. He had lost his cap, and a gash on his head bled slowly.

"What is your name?" asked Vieges.

"Charles Zeller."

"Birthplace and age?"

"Morsbronn, Lower Alsace. Twenty-eight."

"Why aren't you in the army?"

"Because my father paid a substitute."

"Do you consider that sufficient reason to refrain from enlisting when the war seemed to go against France?"

"A bargain is a bargain. If France freed me for money, it did not stipulate win or lose."

"Is that the outlook of a man of honor?"

"I am not a man of honor by profession, monsieur," the peddler replied calmly. "I'm a peddler of tinwares."

Vieges smiled slowly.

"You have a remarkably ready tongue for a peddler by trade and training. You have a remarkably soldierly bearing for a man of your sort. In fact, you are remarkably brave for a self-confessed coward."

"And you speak good French, for an uneducated Alsatian," one of the Raiders put in.

"Did you keep your hands so white, your finger nails unbroken, working at your trade?" asked Saraud.

The peddler turned pale.

"Whose questions am I to answer?" he asked the doctor.

"Mine, and the others."

"I am being tried by men convinced of my guilt," the peddler stated. "However, I should like to know upon what you base your suspicions. I have a birth certificate to prove my identity."

"I happen to know that Charles Zeller, Alsatian, was shot by an Uhlan patrol outside Vesoul," Vieges said accusingly. "I happen to know that the cart you are driving, the horse, and the stock you carry, were his. I happen to know, also, that a certain lieutenant of Baden Dragoons left his command, after a prolonged interview with Von Werder, general commanding the German corps in this region. And I would like to know if it is not possible that you and that lieutenant of dragoons are one and the same man."

"Why should a lieutanant be dressed as a peddler?"

"Because a peddler is an inoffensive person, and *Francs-Tireurs* might very well reveal themselves to him. And a *Franc-Tireur* identified is a dead man."

The peddler smiled. But perspiration gleamed on his forehead.

"My hands are tied," he said, "and I would like to smoke. Will you have one of your men take a cigar from my pocket and light it for me?"

Vieges nodded, and Saraud performed the office.

The so-called Charles Zeller smoked with evident enjoyment. Darlay sat by, in half horrified admiration. It was unnatural to be as brave as that young man.

"Another item against you," Vieges resumed remorselessly. "After speaking to the French officer here present, you halted your cart around the nearest bend of the road, and waited for the patrol. You spoke to the officer in German."

"All Alsatians speak German," the peddler retorted.

"But all Alsatians speaking German do not converse on a basis of equality with an officer of the King of Prussia. To your credit as a soldier, Lieutenant, I must say you have a lot to learn about the business of being a spy."

"Perhaps, were I a spy, I would have behaved less like one."

"After conversing with you, the patrol went back, and beat the bushes around the spot where the man had left the road. Therefore you informed them of his presence." Vieges stood up. "This is useless comedy, and if you can bear any more of it, I can not."

"You will have me shot."

"No, you will be hanged."

"You understand that you have not proved anything," the peddler said. "You will hang me for something that I did not confess—that I deny?"

"Talk is useless. You realize now that you should have been less yourself, and more the peddler you pretended to be. Unfortunately, you will not be able to profit by the lesson."

"That's the way of life," the spy admitted.

Saraud and another man came forward with a rope. One end was looped. The German blinked quickly, shook his head and again managed to smile. Vieges hesitated. There was no doubt of the man's guilt, but it was hard to end the affair in the way it must inevitably end.

VIEGES stepped aside and beckoned to those of his men who appeared to have the most to say. Darlay, not wishing to intrude on a conversation not meant for his ears, kept his place. After a few minutes' conversation, Vieges came forward.

"Lieutenant, I have consulted my men," he said to the spy. "Do you think I am a gentleman?"

"You fight an ungentlemanly warfare," the other declared. "But that thrown out of consideration, I believe you are."

"I know perfectly well you will not admit anything. You are doing your duty. No one blames you. But I suppose you have a family?"

"Very possible."

"Your hands will be untied. You will be given pencil and paper. You can write home. There are invariably many loose ends to connect at the end of one's life. Write your name, your address on the paper. Put it in a blank envelope. I give you my word that I shall not open it until the end of hostilities, that I shall not allow it to be opened. It may ease you to know that your grave will be identified, that—you understand?"

The German hesitated.

"It can not do any harm," he said aloud.

"No," assured Vieges.

"I accept."

Vieges made a sign, and the man was free. Two armed Raiders sat a yard away, watching. But the spy did not attempt to escape. He wrote for several minutes. To Darlay, the sight of that doomed man writing, of those others, silent, waiting for him to finish, assumed unreality.

"What harm would it do any one for him to give his name?" he asked of Vieges.

"I don't see. But perhaps he has orders. They're a queer, cold-blooded lot, those Prussians."

The officer folded the sheets he had covered with fine writing, encased them in the envelope, which he handed, without sealing, to the doctor. Vieges moistened the flap, closed the envelope, and placed it in his pocket.

"After the war, monsieur?"

"Promised, Lieutenant."

There was an exchange of nods, one brave man greeting another.

"A cold night," said the German. He glanced at the rope, then at Vieges questioningly. "I'd prefer to be shot. It's—what shall I say—more elegant."

"Very well, Lieutenant. Will you place yourself at the foot of that tree."

The German nodded and walked firmly to the foot of the tree indicated. He turned and faced the Raiders. Vieges touched the nearest man on the shoulder. The man brought his rifle up, aimed for a short moment. The detonation slapped the air sharply. The wolves stopped howling for a few seconds.

Darlay, who had turned his head aside, looked back toward the spot where the man had stood. There was nothing there, save an imprecise shadow on the snow.

"WE'RE almost there," Saraud announced.

Darlay was surprized. The two had left the Raider's camp scarcely an hour before, at daybreak. Distances had shrunk, apparently, as the stream he had called a river was now a brook and the rocky slope a pebbly rise of ground.

Doctor Vieges had objected to the trip, saying that as the spy had conversed with the patrol, he might very well have warned the men composing it of Darlay's intention to visit the farm. But Saraud had promised to use great care and not expose himself and companion to capture by approaching the front gate. In any case, Darlay pointed out, it was scarcely likely that the Germans would disturb themselves on such vague indication as was supplied by the roadside conversation. He had not said he was going to visit the farm, but had merely inquired about the health of the owner. And Vieges had admitted that perhaps he carried his caution too far.

Saraud halted on the fringe of the wood topping the slope at the foot of which the farm buildings were scattered, inside the inclosing stone wall. There was no sign of the enemy. A farm laborer was breaking the ice of the drinking trough, and a woman crossing the yard, carrying two buckets.

"Know them?" asked Darlay.

"Yes. Your brother kept that man on in spite of the bad weather, to do chores. And that girl is your sister-in-law. Funny

I have to point out your relatives, eh? That boy has been with us on some jobs. And the girl is a brave sort. Used to know her—she's from my village."

"Can I take a chance and go down?"

"Not yet. Wait awhile."

They waited. But the woman disappeared into the kitchen, and came out again. The laborer, after breaking the ice, sawed wood. Darlay saw no reason to delay longer. But Saraud, faithful to his instructions, advised him to be patient.

"I've been looking, and thinking—" he said. "You notice that those two don't talk together. And that fellow saws kind of quick, not lazy like the way a man saws when he feels at ease. The woman, there, she never looks around. Goes from one place to the other as if she was told to."

"If you watch any one long enough, looking for something strange, you'll always find it," Darlay protested. "They're busy, that's all."

"But that's not the way work's done," Saraud insisted. "If you worked like that all the time, you'd drop. Look, that fellow's not been sawing five minutes and he's sweating! See, he shakes his head instead of wiping it with a handkerchief. And he never straightened to grease his saw, the way you'll always see a hired man do."

"You think the Germans are there?"

"If they're acting on what the peddler told them."

For all his rustic simplicity, Saraud thought much, and observed more. With but one half of that keen sense, coupled with education, the French generals would have avoided their defeats. Saraud would not have been the leader to crowd his forces between hills and neglect to guard himself.

"I guess it's all off for today," Darlay agreed regretfully. "Let's go back."

They reported their suspicions to Vieges. The doctor laughed softly.

"I'll send out a few men to drop one or two of those Prussians when they ride away," he said. "I wouldn't like them to get back to their quarters without having a little excitement. Life is dull in the army."

Darlay, somewhat depressed by the postponement of the meeting with his brother, sat aside from the others, and stared gloomily into the ashes of the fire before him. Saraud, who was not far off, came and slapped him good-naturedly on the shoulder.

"Brace up, Darlay!" he said laughingly. "Give us some military advice."

The lieutenant did not resent this chaff, which he felt he deserved. Had it not been for the peasant at his side, he, who had come to advise, would have run headlong into a trap, just as he had talked himself into this very situation, by his trust of the peddler.

Military advice—what could he say? There was not much to be done, save to snipe at the riders as they left. An idea came to him, however, which he thought worth mentioning.

He went over to Vieges.

"There's certainly not more than a dozen to fifteen men in that patrol, Doctor. We have over fifty men here. Why not attack them in the farm house?"

"My men are not trained soldiers. I can not ask them to carry a house by storm, especially a house as strongly built and easy to defend as your brother's. You misunderstand my purpose. I don't want to be seen. I don't want a prolonged engagement. If I gave in to the temptation to fight that way we'd lose the advantage of the mystery that clings to us. They have caught one or two of us, but were never absolutely sure that they belonged to this band."

"My brother, who was in Mexico, wrote me that his men were nervous because they never saw the enemy," Darlay assented.

"We mean a shot from nowhere. If they ever saw us in actual conflict our effect would be gone."

"But suppose I should suggest a way in which none of your men would be seen, and none of the riders would get away alive?"

"If it could be done."

"Four or five men can drop one or two men. That's giving margin for misses. Our whole force could be counted upon to take care of fifteen."

"With the first shot every patrol in the region will converge toward the firing. The riders will take cover in the bushes, if they're in the open, and hang on until help arrives. What you say is mathematically certain, only if one assumes other conditions."

"You talk like a general," Darlay said with a smile.

Vieges cursed under his breath, but he was half smiling, and looked as if tempted.

"Tell the men your plan," he said. "And if they'll chance it, I will."

The others listened attentively. It was not without a hint of nervousness that Darlay accepted responsibility for success or failure. If matters did not take the turn he expected he could just as well leave the Raiders. They would never listen to him again.

A FEW minutes before ten o'clock that morning Darlay left the fringe of the woods behind the farmhouse, a rifle in the crook of his arm. He had dropped the hood of his dark cape, and his *kêpi* glittered. He walked firmly toward the wall.

The Prussians, he felt, would try to capture him alive to obtain information. It was only the second phase of the program that might prove dangerous. A short distance from the wall, he hesitated, and instead of walking straight ahead toward the back gate, he circled in the direction of the road, as if intending to enter by the front gate.

He remembered the small details Saraud had noticed and tried to appear as casual as possible, neither showing excessive caution, nor too great boldness. When within a few feet of the front gate, behind which he felt the riders were waiting for him, he bolted for the orchard, hurdled the fence, and streaked down toward the road.

The detonation of a Dreyse carbine gave the signal for scattered shots from the upper windows, where the men in the house could see over the inclosing wall. Then followed the duller sound of pistols. The carbines missed, because the marksmen had been surprized by Alfred's sudden move; the pistols, because the range was too great for effective use.

Darlay, running through the trees, knew that the big moment had come. On the decision of the German leader within the next few seconds depended the success of the plan. His heart thumped from excitement and the speed of his flight. He heard shouts in German, the sound of men running, while from the court-yard of the farm came the trampling of horses.

He gained the road.

Behind, he heard the hoofbeats of the nearest horse, gaining swiftly upon him. He threw the rifle aside, then rid himself of the cape. The time it had taken the Germans to mount had given him an advantage, and he was over a hundred yards up the road when the first rider came near enough to slash at him with a saber. He threw himself flat against the embankment, and the rider passed him, with a swish of the heavy blade.

Then came the first dry reports of the Chassepots. The fusillade crackled briefly. Darlay looked for the rider who had so recently pursued him. He was on his stomach thirty feet away. His horse was still running, stirrups flapping on either side.

"Uhlans—" he noted with satisfaction.

Uhlans had given him many uncomfortable moments during his escape from the concentration camp at Sedan.

He listened.

No more shots, which meant success.

The plan had been simple, though complicated in the telling. He had based the idea upon the fact that the Germans would expect him, as he had been described by the peddler, wearing a French uniform. He also knew that they had no information concerning the spy's fate and the fact that he was on his guard. Coming toward the farm from the woods, he had tried to give evidence of growing suspicion. Then he had bolted for the road. The Germans must have believed that one of their number had unguardedly shown himself, each man suspecting another of this bit of clumsiness.

The time necessary to mount, the varying speeds of the horses, scattered their forces. And fifteen isolated riders over a stretch of one hundred yards were as clear and definite targets as fifteen isolated riders scattered along ten miles. The bushes were swarming with the Raiders, each man an expert marksman. The result—annihilation of the patrol.

From afar came an isolated shot, then a trumpet call. The other patrols on the road were coming toward the firing. The shot was no doubt a signal.

Darlay ran back, found his coat, his rifle, and climbed the embankment. He looked about for the men who had come with him a few minutes before, but saw none. He recalled that the word had been given to scatter after one discharge, regardless of the result, and to meet at the camp. Here and there Darlay found the prints of a man's boots in the snow.

"I wonder why the Germans don't follow the tracks," he muttered.

A little thought gave the answer. If the tracks were followed by a contingent strong enough to be effective, another surprize attack became possible. Darlay recalled reports that had seeped through into Langres. The Prussians had beaten the woods with four or five battalions, for hours on end. The result had been the capture of one or two *Francs-Tireurs*, whom they had hanged. The payment a half-score killed and thirty-odd wounded. And those men had not been the Night Raiders, led by Vieges, but merely a band of sharpshooters, commanded by a former forest guard.

In the camp Darlay found the men gathered. The doctor was smiling, a strange twisted smile.

"We settled the problem for them, all right. Fifteen of them. The shooting broke out over such a long stretch, they hesitated, not knowing which way to turn. We lost one man."

"By this time, " Saraud put in, "I bet the patrols have united, and are counting noses out there in the road. Won't —— reign in the villages for a few days?"

"The village nearest the attack will be fined heavily," the doctor explained. "They may even shoot one or two poor devils out of meanness and desire for revenge. Can't blame them altogether. Losses sound bad in official reports, when there's been no glorious engagement, when they occur in a so-called occupied and pacified region. The general in command of the German armies raises —— with the commanding general of the army corps in Vesoul. The commanding general raises —— with the colonel in Port-sur-Saone. The colonel raises —— with the major or captain commanding village nearest scene of attack. If officer of the patrol is alive, he catches it for carelessness. If not, the poor peasants are questioned and shot."

The man on guard at the top of the cleft bent over and called down—

"Say, boys, you ought to see the smoke!"

There was a general scramble for the open. True enough, above the trees to the north east, a cloud of dark smoke was rising into the sky and, blown by the wind, was covering half the horizon. A red glow suffused the lower edge.

There was a hush. Each man looked, first at the sky, then at his companions. Saraud came to Darlay.

"You know what that is, Darlay, don't you?"

"The—farm—"

"Yes."

Not finding the culprits, the united patrols were burning his brother's farmhouse in reprisal. Perhaps they had shot him. Also, perhaps, his family had suffered a like fate, his wife, his children. It was unjust, this punishment of an innocent man.

But who was guilty in war?

BY EVENING the Raiders received information from the inhabitants of the village. Jules, at the first shots heard on the road, had fled to the woods taking with him his wife and two sons. And he had come out only after obtaining protection from a German officer. His wisdom was proved by the fate of the laborer, who had stayed near by. The first Uhlans to arrive saw the bodies of their comrades strewn for a hundred yards in the snow. They were without an officer, and the laborer was hanged, in spite of his attempts to prove his innocence. The furniture of the farm was thrown under him and set aflame. The few cows that Jules had been able to keep from requisition had been butchered, and the rest of the live stock slaughtered.

Jules, now sheltered at the home of a friend in Echezbeau, with his family, was said to be prostrated by the loss.

Darlay was not surprized. As a little boy, when others said, "my top," he said, "my farm." He had never had a thought, never made a move that was not for the prosperity of his property. In letters to Alfred, written before his marriage, he had been silent concerning the youth and beauty of his bride-to-be, but he had mentioned that she was a good worker, and possessed of a sense of thrift. The universe had been embraced, for Jules, within the fields and orchards he had inherited, within the house and the money derived from his labor. In the space of a few minutes all his property had gone up in smoke.

But when a man has seen fifteen thousand men go down in a few hours, as Alfred had seen at Froeschwiller, when he has been present at the last stand of an empire, as he had been at Sedan, the gutting of a farmhouse, even the house where he had been born, did not seem particularly awe-inspiring. He felt sure that Jules would achieve a philosophical outlook, and reason that, when others risked their lives, he could well risk his property.

Surely, Jules must have enough of the qualities of old Auguste to retain that spark of patriotism. In spite of the love of gain, strong in him as in other land owners, Auguste would have seen, without whimpering, his place go up in flames, if those flames served his country.

Doctor Vieges decided to disband his Raiders for a few days.

Fifty men are difficult to conceal. And the next few hours would bring determined efforts on the part of the Prussians to clean up the woods. Those who were able to gain their homes without danger of capture were to do so, the others were to scatter in groups of three or four, and make their way, either to the neutral zone existing between the French and German armies before Langres, or across the Saone River.

Vieges decided to keep Darlay with him.

The next morning, cavalry arrived in numbers from Vesoul. The two men, hiding on the fringe of the forest, saw the endless files moving up the roads. There were Hussards, Uhlans, dragoons, Light Horse, and even a half hundred *Kurassiers*, gigantic blond men on big horses, glittering in the sun, from the toe of the high riding-boots to the tip of the spike on the helmets.

Vieges led the way eight hundred yards from the road and placed himself behind a tree from which he obtained a clear vision across a vista of fields and dividing walls. He shouldered his piece several times before pulling the trigger.

The *Kurassier* in the lead brought both hands to his throat, and fell slowly back on the rump of his horse.

"Sliced his whistle for him," Vieges remarked. "Let's move on."

The death of the captain of *Kurassiers*, following so closely the tragedy of the previous morning, enraged the riders. But they could find no one to vent their wrath upon.

Toward noon, the battalion quartered in Echezbeau, Baden infantry, came out and combed the vicinity of the farm, progressing cautiously in wide open order. They were good looking soldiers, in their greatcoats and spiked helmets. For the best part of two hours they shot stumps and bayoneted bushes. Dividing into small parties, they picked up various tracks, proceeding for a few hundred yards among the trees. Darlay could hear them shouting to one another.

"They'll find the camp,'' he suggested.

"I don't think they'll risk themselves that far."

They did not. One group, commanded by an officer, set out in the right direction, but turned about after the chief had consulted a map.

Darlay and Vieges kept on the move. It was unwise to stop for any length of time. Steadily they drew nearer the Saone River, retreating before the cordon.

"Can you swim?" asked Vieges.

"Well enough."

"We may have to dive in, if they crowd us."

But the first flakes of another flurry whirled down. Whistles were blown, drums beaten, and the battalion left the woods, to form in column on the nearest road.

Vieges then led the way back to the cleft, shotgun slung from his shoulder, strap supported on the right thumb. Darlay carried the Chassepot rifle, and kept pace with the older man, not an easy thing, for the white-bearded doctor was wiry and strong of wind.

Today, also, the bells of the villages were ringing. Mingling with them, the regular beat of hundreds of feet on the road, punctuated by sharp orders. There was a faint hum in the air composed of the many sounds made by the retiring cavalry on other trails. Soon a chorus lifted from the infantry, a slow, dirge-like hymn. This kept up for several minutes, then the shrilling of the fifes, and the drone of the small flat drums regulated the march.

A Uhlan trumpet squealed several thin notes, answered by other trumpets from the cavalry detachments.

Drums and fifes—the piercing music of battle had contrasted sharply with the gay sound of French bugles in Alsace. The souls of the armies seemed to be embodied in their music. The bugle, gay, confident, alert, spoke of a headlong, careless onslaught that broke or was broken. The *spiel* of the German infantry brought to mind the sight of their long blue lines, fringed by glittering spikes and scintillating bayonets, advancing remorsefully, like nothing human—like a tide, an avalanche, an irresistible force that crushed and mangled whatever was caught in its path. Those Prussian lines had drowned out the colorful battalions of Turcos, of Zouaves, had obliterated those other blue lines formed by the *Chasseurs*.

GERMANY, the nation of dreamers, had awakened The sullen energy concealed beneath the placid exterior had broken through the century-old calm of the race. It was the explosion of a human volcano that sent its lava into France. Those Prussians seemed to fight not only for themselves, but for their fathers, beaten and humiliated by Napoleon. Their triumph was more than the triumph of the moment, it was the pent-up resentment of sixty-four years at last breaking to the surface, in a wild surge of unbelieving delight.

There were too many of them, too many to hope for a national victory. The victories must be small, man to man. Vieges was right—the military effort was of the past. If the splendid armies of the French empire had failed against the invaders, the makeshift armies of the new republic could not hope to win. But one thing might be proved—that there was an honorable manner to lose. That France was still capable of that supreme elegance, a sacrifice of blood for honor.

"Those boots—" said Vieges— "I feel as if each one was beating on my heart."

"The time will come when our boots will be pounding on them."

"Then, theirs on ours, until the end of time," Vieges murmured.

"Perhaps—"

The doctor laughed.

"There is hope," he said. "Five hundred years ago a man from this region considered a man from Central France a foe. The wars then were as bitter as now. Five hundred years hence, who knows?"

"There are things that are not forgotten."

"All things are sometime forgotten," Vieges said. "But we have been set down in our time. Three hundred years ago Burgundians cried, 'Down with Armagnac!' and now Burgundians and Armagnac cry, '*Vive la France.*' It's a strange universe, ours. Which, however, should not keep us from acting within our limits."

"You don't hate the Prussians?"

"The human being in me does not."

"How can a man split his soul in half?"

"How can the moon and the sun both exist? I am a Frenchman, they are Prussians. We are therefore enemies. I am a man, they are men. We are therefore brothers. But you do not see the moon when the sun is shining."

Vieges had become suddenly alert. His eyes had assumed the peculiar shiftiness of glance Darlay had before noticed.

"A horseman—alone—" he said.

"And the sun is shining," concluded Darlay.

Vieges hurried forward, leaping in long strides over the snow. His figure, veiled by the falling snow, was distorted into an elongated distorted shape, like a gnome leaping through the aisles of his forest home.

By the road he waited for Darlay. Then he craned his head to one side and listened.

"The others have gone," he said. "Those who will hear the detonation will not turn back. By now they know that, as the thunder comes after lightning, a shot comes with death."

The rider, whoever he might be, was in a hurry. The hoof beats neared speedily. Vieges had his gun on his shoulder, and the same hand that had killed the captain of *Kurassiers* at eight hundred yards, could scarcely miss at eight.

The man appeared, an officer of dragoons. He rode well, bending slightly forward, one hand on his hip. Evidently he did not believe ambush possible at this time, so soon after the search of the afternoon, for he was smiling, as if engrossed in pleasant thoughts.

He passed Vieges and Darlay without glancing in their direction.

With the shot, the horse shortened his stride. The rider fell over his mount's head, still holding the reins, as Darlay had seen jockeys fall. His head disappeared into the snow, and he remained in a crouched position, knees bent to support the weight of the body. The free hand was flung out, fingers relaxed.

The horse stopped immediately.

Vieges listened for a few minutes; then, together, the two Frenchmen descended the embankment.

"Turn him over," ordered Vieges.

Darlay grasped the shoulders, and straightened the torso. The helmet remained in the snow. For a fraction of a second, Darlay hesitated to drop the corpse he held back into the trampled snow. The lips were still smiling.

"Through the heart," Vieges said.

He swiftly unbuttoned the coat, the tunic.

Darlay watched in amazement, his instinctive protest against looting held back only with an effort. But Vieges did not disturb the gold he found in the man's belt, did not even take the saber or helmet as a trophy. He was after papers, and found an elongated wallet, which seemed likely to hold them. Also, he confiscated the map-case. The two pistols on the saddle he slipped into his belt. From the saddle bags he seized a parcel of food, and a metal flask, which, upon being opened, proved to contain brandy.

"We'll take these," Vieges announced. "The poor devil won't be able to use them." Without showing the slightest distaste he took a long swallow from the flask. Then he made a swift choice of papers. Whatever appeared to have official character went into his breast pocket, the rest remained in the wallet, which he replaced where he found it. This done, without thinking, he straightened the dead man's attire, hooked the fasteners of the collar.

"One thing my profession overcomes," he remarked, "is the average man's aversion to handling a dead man. Of late I procure my own specimens."

"You work, it might be phrased, more openly," Darlay said in an attempt at a joke.

Vieges lifted his gun, as if to make an end of the bewildered horse.

"I suppose I should," he said. "He'll be of use to others. But I haven't the heart."

He slapped the silky rump with his open hand, and watched the animal disappear down the road.

Without another look at the dead man, he nodded to Darlay and led the way into the woods.

That night Doctor Vieges made two entries in a small note-book, in which he kept what he termed "his account," the captain of *Kurassier*, and the dragoon. Keeping a record of what the Germans might very well name assassinations, Vieges was taking a big chance. If caught, there was little possibility that he would fall upon a German officer dense enough not to connect at once, by date and entry, the notes with the killing of various officers. But, as the old doctor said, he would hang in any case, and he would like to leave in the hands of his captors proof that his score had been settled in advance.

To tell the truth, Darlay was beginning to incline toward a return to Langres. His training in the army had not prepared him for this cold-blooded killing from ambush. Under the excitement prevailing among the band, he had accepted his share of the work at hand without grumbling. In the brush with the patrol he had taken his life in his hands, or more correctly, trusted it to his legs. But he could not wipe out from his memory the sight of the Baden dragoon, pitched face forward into the snow, landing in a ridiculous posture, with the seat of his trousers higher than his head. In the Zouaves, as well as in the line infantry, he had encountered many men who had campaigned in Mexico. They all despised the warfare of the bush.

IT WAS all very well, Darlay reasoned, for these Night-Raiders to carry on their bloody work. They were all middle-aged, or very near it. Their homes had been invaded. The Germans were none too gentle with the civilian population, when they handled a conquered town. But Darlay was a soldier by profession, and his trade was to fight in the open, within the limits laid down from time immemorial between soldiers.

He approached Vieges and said that he had come to the realization that he was of less use in the woods than he would be at the head of a section or company of *Mobiles*, when the long expected activity of the French Army of the East occurred.

Vieges nodded understandingly:

"I don't blame you, Lieutenant. That little incident of the dragoon rather took you aback. You believe that he should have been given a chance. Yet, on a large scale, is not all warfare identical with the course I pursue? At Wissenburg, at Froeschwiller, at Sedan, were the odds even? Did the Germans kindly offer you boys part of their efficient artillery? At Sedan, did they not trap you, and when they had you helpless before them, did they not demand an unconditional surrender? Slaying ten, fifteen or twenty thousand men as the result of a surprize is loyal. Shooting one down from behind a bush is disloyal?"

Darlay was silent. What could he say? He might have objected that the crushing of any army had an immediate bearing on the result of the war, while the sniping of an isolated man did not. But who was to say when death is important, when not?

"Can you read German?" Vieges asked suddenly.

"I used to know the tongue enough to speak a few words. But that's all."

"It's fortunate that I can, in this particular case." He brought out several papers. "You take exception to the killing of that dragoon. I gave the matter more thought than you imagine. I was wondering what his purpose was, on his way to Echezbeau all alone. I came to the conclusion that he was somehow delayed in starting from Vesoul, and at the last minute, as he had heard that the roads were well patroled today, decided to chance it without an escort. You know that he did not miss the infantry column by more than a half hour. Being alone, I presumed that he must be bearing a message. From his rank I surmised that the message was likely to be of importance. Among his papers I found this list." He showed Darlay a sheet of paper. "Sounds like a grocer's inventory, so many pounds of coffee, so many barrels of wine. Evidently a list of supplies for the battalion in Echezbeau."

"Evidently."

"These supplies cannot be carried by balloon."

"And you will—"

"Attack the supply train." He indicated a line on the list. "This means there's money coming with it. The back pay of the detachments of Hussards and Uhlans. It is in French coin. Therefore, it manifestly was taken from us. I believe some of your men have need of money. If you will wait, I'll send that money with you to Langres, with my compliments to the general, as a small proof that when possible I try to be useful to the French, as well as disagreeable to the Prussians. And for the occasion, I will depart from my principles. I will attack in broad daylight—conduct, as you see a military operation."

"Will you have enough men?"

"If my assumptions are correct."

"There is more than one road from Vesoul to Echezbeau," suggested Darlay.

Vieges opened the map case.

"A good example that information should not be put down in black and white. The dragoon was altogether too methodical, which leads me to think that he is the officer in charge of the supply train. If I'm not mistaken, the blue pencil marks the route. You will see that all the other pencil marks have been erased. So the one that remains clear is evidently the one to be used." The doctor pointed to the map. "You see, the train will follow the main road as far as Port-sur-Saone. Now, about four kilometers this side of that village, you see this other road, the country road?"

"I see it on the map, and I know it well."

"Then you must remember the wood on the left as you turn into that narrower road from the main road, a few hundred meters away from it."

"Yes."

"That's our place of ambush tomorrow at daybreak."

"Well chosen," Darlay admitted, "provided your assumptions are correct."

"The train arrived late this afternoon at Port-sur-Saone. You have seen all the cavalry here today? Von Werder may need it elsewhere tomorrow. On arrival at Port-sur-Saone, the captain probably found out that the cavalry was leaving, all save the usual patrols. The French may be showing signs of activity and the men are needed there, to feel out whether it's another false alarm, or serious. Finding this out, realizing that the train might not be altogether safe, the dragoon rode ahead, to make arrangements with the major commanding in Echezbeau."

"If this supply train is so important, why has it not a strong escort?"

"Some good reason. Probably expected the cavalry to be here, which for some other good reason has been forced to go elsewhere." The doctor indicated a spot some distance down the country road he had before indicated. "This blue cross is probably the spot where the patrols from Echezbeau are to meet the train. If I know the Prussians, they will never imagine that things are not as they should be. The Port-sur-Saone patrol will not leave their usual route, but will ride on toward Combeaufontaine. And as the dragoon will not reach Echezbeau the train will be comparatively unprotected."

"What about your men? You told them not to come back until the coast was clear."

"Isn't it clear? They'll be back tonight."

"And they won't take advantage of the opportunity to get a little rest?"

"My men have their hearts in this work. Your privates will always try to get the greatest number of loafing hours, and my men long for the time of action."

The Raiders returned to the camp throughout the night. By dawn very few were missing, and those kept back by the impossibility of crossing the German cordons southeast. Vieges found himself at the head of fifty-three men. Several of the number had gathered information.

General Von Werder, commanding the Fourteenth Corps of the German army, was holding the line of communication in the region he commanded, directing the seige of Belfort, and covering both Langres and Besançon, where French forces were massing. Had the French possessed leaders who trusted in the native fighting ability of their men, instead of putting them through wearying drills day after day, the war might have assumed a different aspect. Closing in on Von Werder, they would have forced him to evacuate, have dislocated the communications between Germany and the forces besieging Paris, which would have resulted, forcibly, in a withdrawal in mass of the Germans.

A BRISK attack, pushed home without hesitation, would have altered history. Napoleon, in such a situation, would have turned the early successes of the invaders into rout. But, apparently, there was no great military leader among the generals in the east. They passed their time in shifting responsibility on one another. Garibaldi, lukewarm in his efforts, repeatedly failed to back up his comrades, the French generals. All the fiery eloquence in the world could not drive the Germans back.

Werder, an able chief, was aware of his danger, and to his credit did not count on the French stupidity to help him out, as he had reason to do judging them by past performances. He handled his troops skillfully, to best advantage. Occasionally, however, detail suffered for a larger issue. After the strong effort to clear the Echezbeau woods of the *Francs-Tireurs* the news came that the French were on the move from Besançon. This necessitated the presence of all available cavalry on that front.

At least a part of the doctor's suppositions had proved true.

A few minutes after six o'clock that morning the Raiders lined the fringe of wood dominating the country road chosen by the doctor. On the other side of the road open fields stretched toward Combeaufontaine. The men knew they would probably have to come to a hand-to-hand conflict with the teamsters, who were armed with saber and carbine. But there was no protest. Those who possessed bayonets fastened them to their rifles. Darlay found in his hand the weapon he had been trained to use—the long Chassepot, tipped by the slim blade of steel. Vieges had re-loaded the pistols taken from the dragoon and declared that they would soon be used in a manner little expected by the former owner. After the long-drawn-out slinking from bush to bush, the prospect of open fighting was not distasteful.

There was to be a first volley, directed at the drivers and horses. Then the band was to sweep down, and search for the box of gold. The sum was mentioned as a little over one hundred thousand francs in gold, not a great weight, seventy-one or two pounds. This prize secured, the man who found it was to shout the news, and all were to withdraw and retreat through the woods, before the arrival of the patrols, who would immediately rush for the spot where the firing had broken out.

The episode was not to last many minutes.

"What about our wounded?" Saraud asked.

"We will have no wounded," retorted Vieges, "for the man who falls must be left behind and die."

A hard rule to make, but best agreed upon ahead of time.

For the first time Darlay had been granted authority beyond the others. He commanded fifteen men who were to serve as reserve until needed and be ready to cover the retreat, in case help arrived for the supply train before the Raiders gained cover. These men he picked out, men who had once been soldiers. He was fairly certain that they would obey him. Among them were two veterans of the Crimean War, four who had fought in Italy and the others had served in Algeria. He had noticed them, for the professional manner in which their equipment was distributed and fastened. There was a way to pack a knapsack that no one but an ex-soldier would employ.

Probably the ablest among them was forty-four-year-old Gregaud, a massive fellow, the tallest of the Raiders. He lacked nervous daring, but on the other hand he would not quickly give way to panic. He had but one fault—he always drew comparison between the situation in which he found himself, and another, more dangerous, that he had successfully faced. He prided himself upon the fact that he never ducked when a bullet passed near-by, as did some of the civilians among the *Francs-Tireurs*.

After the instructions had been given, Vieges recommended silence. His shot was to give the signal of attack.

At seven there was no sign of the supply train. At seven-thirty, nothing had appeared upon the road. Keeping the silence ordered, the men had looked at each other doubtfully.

Ten minutes later the Echezbeau patrol passed on the far road, in a jingle of stirrups and chains. For a moment Darlay feared that it had been informed of the coming supplies, and was about to turn to the right, into the side road. But the hoof-beats dwindled away to the west.

Minutes passed.

A lone Hussard was coming down the country road from the Port-sur-Saone highway. A sergeant, Darlay noted. He felt the men at his side tensing. From the corner of his eye he saw Saraud clutching the stock of his Chassepot. Apparently unconcerned, the Hussard glanced casually in their direction, surveyed the fields and passed on.

Gregaud pressed his lips almost against Darlay's ear.

"Cavalry 'point'," he whispered.

ANOTHER fifteen minutes went by, and the rider reappeared, retracing his steps. He was puzzled, evidently, and turned in the saddle to look back. He vanished in the direction of the main road. Darlay reasoned that he had been sent out to locate the patrol that was to assume the protection of the carts. Not finding it, he was reporting. As his words would contradict the stated intention of an officer, he had waited a few minutes, and was assuring himself that the patrol was not in sight behind him.

There were two possibilities now—the train would proceed down the country road alone, or the patrol of which the scout was a member would for the moment disregard its schedule and accompany the train as far as Echezbeau.

Soon he heard the approaching wagons, the wheels creaking over the hard snow. All around him the Raiders were making ready. Gregaud panted with excitement. Darlay himself was quivering. This was one of the minutes that count as days in a man's life.

Two Hussards came in sight.

The patrol was escorting the train! The two riders passed on unmolested. The first wagon appeared. There was a man in the driver's seat. Another walked at the head of the horses, a teamster, with a whip held across his torso, and the ponderous gait caused by the iron rod on the left boot to protect the leg against the wagon-tongue. This added weight brought about the heavy limp, the comical, duck-like waddle.

Behind this first wagon came others. Darlay counted ten. That meant ten drivers. There was the non-com. who had taken command in the absence of the captain of dragoons. There were twelve Hussards, including the two who had gone ahead. All told, twenty-five men, odds that should not frighten a leader disposing of fifty-three, even if those fifty-three were not regulars.

Vieges had moved. Would he give the signal? Would his eternal caution prevent him?

A shot rang out.

The non-com., riding to the left of the second wagon, fell from the saddle. The drivers were scrambling from their seats to the shelter of the wagons, groping for the carbines. The Hussards had turned their mounts to face in the direction from which the shots had come. All this Darlay saw in less than a second. Then things became confused.

The Raiders fired. More men fell on the road. Now, the *Francs-Tireurs* had left the bushes, were tumbling down the snowy slope of the embankment. The survivors among the drivers and Hussards were making a bold stand. Saraud, halted in headlong course, fell heavily. Vieges, well ahead, waved his shotgun over his head.

"Come on! *Vive la France!*"

The Raiders were swarming about the Germans. But Darlay saw there would be need of a reserve, so he ordered his men forward. Gregaud, who had served under the empire, forgot that for two months now France had been a Republic, and uttered his own battle cry—

"*Vive l' empereur!*"

Within a few minutes the engagement was

over, and Vieges was leading the search for gold. Gregaud, practical now as at all times, picked up a hatchet in one of the carts and broke in the sides of the wine barrels. Darlay followed his example. The supplies must be destroyed. There was dry straw laid in the bottoms of the wagons. This suggested a swifter means of destruction.

Darlay then set the straw afire. Others were shooting the horses.

"Here it is!" called Vieges.

Gregaud, near at hand, took the heavy wooden coffer in his arms. The Baden infantry would not get its pay this day. The wagons had caught fire. The smoke swirled, forming a choking cloud. The remaining horses ran away. A burning cart careened into the field.

The success had been so swiftly attained, so amazingly complete, that the Raiders lingered for a few minutes, enjoying their triumph. Their casualties had been few. Saraud and another man had been killed, a dozen men carried slashes from the flying sabers of the Hussars, others had been wounded by the missiles of the Dreyes carbines. But every one was able to walk, and the necessity of leaving a maimed comrade to fall into the hands of the enemy was avoided.

Vieges recovered first, and barked his orders. His men followed him into the wood. They had progressed nearly a kilometer when they heard the sound of firing. The patrols had arrived and were discharging their guns into the woods. The *Francs-Tireurs* were elated. This first departure from the desultory sharp-shooting seemed to be an excellent augury of greater successes to come.

"By ——! I'm glad you gave us the signal, Doctor!" Darlay exclaimed.

"You were afraid I wouldn't? To tell you the truth, so was I. As you may have noticed, I am somewhat egotistical, and I wished to prove a point."

The men lagged behind, looking backward, watching the pale sky spreading over the tree tops.

The smoke from the supply train dwindled into graying streaks, but two sooty pillars were rising at a distance farther away. This time, Darlay did not need to question. The patrols were engaged in the customary reprisals. The farmhouses nearest at hand were being put to the torch.

WHEN the German troops had first come to Echezbeau, they had posted in conspicuous places the proclamation of the King of Prussia to the inhabitants of France. There was one on the wall of the village inn, one in the mayor's office. From time to time, as the occasion demanded, other bills were pasted beneath this poster.

The first proclamation was couched in gentle terms.

Proclamation to the French People:

> **We, William, King of Prussia, to the inhabitants of the portion of French Territory occupied by the German Armies, make known what follows . . . Military events have led me to cross the frontier of France. I make war upon the French soldiers and not upon the inhabitants, whose persons and belongings will be safeguarded as long as they shall not take away from me, by aggressions against the German troops, the right to protect them. The Generals commanding each Corps will make known to the public the measures they are authorized to take against communities and individuals who act against the laws of war. They will settle also all that may concern requisitions that may be necessary to the need of the troops, and to facilitate transactions between the troops and the inhabitants, they will fix the rate of exchange to regulate the French and German moneys.**
>
> **Saint-Avold, August 11th, 1870**
>
> WILLIAM.

Other proclamations were more terse. Fines were announced, the execution of various civilians who had infringed their rights as civilians, or who were supposed to have done so, proclaimed.

On the day following the burning of the supply train, a manuscript poster was issued and pasted on every wall designated.

Obviously, the major commanding was out of patience. The limit of his endurance had been reached. He declared in no uncertain terms that the money stolen by armed civilians from a cart of his majesty's armies would be reimbursed by a fine levied on the two towns or villages nearest the place of attack. The assessment would have to be paid, in gold, to the commander. There were threats against hostages held by the Germans, and a subtle justification of the Uhlans and Hussars of the patrols who had killed—the paper used the word "executed"—peasants near the scene of the crime. Two men had been found on the road, with powder stains on their clothing, had been court-martialed, and would be shot the next morning.

Incidentally, those two men maintained

that the stains were not of powder, but of charcoal. They insisted that their blouses be placed under the noses of the court-martial judges. But after the humiliating defeat of the Hussard patrol, everything smelled of powder to the Germans.

The last paragraphs were more interesting.

The actions of an isolated band of men, of *Francs-Tireurs*, have brought ruin and death to many of the inhabitants of this region. The men guilty of such aggressions are not patriots. They are sneaking, blood-thirsty men, only worthy of the rope.

It is the interest of the inhabitants, as well as that of the German troops that these depredations be ended as swiftly as possible, to save further useless bloodshed.

The Major commanding, who has at heart the well being not only of his troops but of the peaceful citizens of the vicinity, will pay well for information leading to the capture of the *Francs-Tireurs*.

To assure the safety of the man giving information, absolute secrecy is guaranteed, for there are among the inhabitants many with a mistaken conception of what constitutes patriotism.

Signed—
WEGSTETTEN, BATAILLONS-KOMMANDEUR.

This, to any one able to read between the lines, was an admission of Wagstetten's inability to cope with the situation by use of force. The peasants who gathered before the posters looked at each other with sly wrinkles about the eyes, not daring to laugh before the glowering sentries.

Many had suffered because of the *Francs-Tireurs*. But it lifted the sting of defeat to see the invaders clamoring for informers. The East was not a sinecure for troops of occupation! The countryside bred husky sons, these Germans were finding out! One old fellow, who had lost a son early in the war, whose farm had been burned, who would be among the hardest hit by the fine, said softly—

"I'd be willing to give all I have left to see them squirm a while longer."

"Do you think any one will give them away for the sake of the reward?"

The old man lifted his heavy shoulders in a shrug. "Perhaps. When dirt is looked for, it can be found." The old peasant moved off. "I have to report at Wegstetten's quarters. He is questioning all of us who live near the woods. He has called for me, for Justin Proust, for Jules Darlay."

"Won't get any news out of either," the other commented. "Proust—" He winked. "He can't talk. Jules is a quiet fellow, and kind of soured just now. But he had two brothers killed in the army, one in Mexico, and the kid, Alfred, in Alsace. He don't love the Prussians, you bet."

MAJOR WEGSTETTEN had established his quarters on the first floor of the inn, where he occupied two rooms. One of these was used as an office. The rest of the building sheltered the lieutenant of Uhlans, the lieutenant of Hussars and the subaltern officers of the Baden battalion, besides the several non-coms. assigned to clerical work.

At the head of the stairs, in the hall, a sort of waiting-room had been arranged, long benches placed against the walls. Upon these benches had sat many uneasy persons. Some had been taken out to be shot. The thoughts of all these unhappy men seemed to have seeped into the plastering, and to exhale discouragement and death. The stairway, which had once resounded with the gay laughter from below, was now a sort of ladder leading up to trouble. There was always present a sentry, bayoneted rifle in hand, who wished himself away drinking with his comrades, and passed his bad humor by tyrannizing over the perturbed human beings who came there against their will.

Jules Darlay was now waiting his turn to appear before the major.

He did not look unlike Alfred. But he was taller, heavier, his face full and round. At first glance he appeared to lack much of his younger brother's intelligence. But the eyes, which at first gave an impression of stolidity, were deep set and calculating. His hands were huge, and calloused from the rough work he had always done. His blouse was starched and shone from the iron.

Not content with destroying his farm, the German officer might accuse him of complicity, and try him. He had noticed long ago that to be placed on trial was equivalent to being condemned. A civilian who faced a German court-martial was doomed. Jules had thought of his two small sons and wife and, after the first depression following his loss, had been striving to gather himself for a new start. And now he was fearful that he would lose his life. A misguided remark, two words when one would have been sufficient, and his family would have to struggle on without him.

The old peasant had been questioned first, and had come out with a bitter, defiant smile. He lighted his pipe in the hall, threw the match in the general direction of the sentry and stumped heavily down the stairs, mumbling half aloud uncomplimentary comments on his recent questioner.

Justin Proust, an easy-going sort of man, who was strongly suspected of having taken part in several of the *Francs-Tireurs* exploits, was the next to go in. Justin, who was not a wife-beater, had struck his wife for telling a neighbor he had been out late at night. He must have had some grave reason to wish to impress his wife with the need for silence. Through the door, Jules could hear his voice, booming out confidently, for Proust was never known to speak in any tone but a bull-like bellow.

"No, monsieur, I don't know. No, monsieur, I cannot tell!"

Jules could not hear the major's voice, but gathered from the replies what questions would be asked of him when he went before Wegstetten.

"Good-by, monsieur, and good health—"

The door opened, and Proust came out. He stopped near Jules, and leaned forward, with a cautious look about him, as if about to speak to him. Instead, he turned, and went down the stairs.

The young sergeant, who was employed by the major as secretary held the door open, and beckoned.

Jules obediently rose, and entered, holding his felt hat in his hands.

The room was darker than the hall, the curtains were drawn across the narrow windows. It was at first difficult to distinguish the major.

Wegstetten sat behind a table. He was a large man, with a heavy face that was colored the shade of old walnut wood. His hair was iron-gray, but the mustache was still blond. Under a broad, high forehead he concealed the sharpest eyes Jules had ever looked into. These eyes were pale blue, almost white. The steadiness of the gaze was annoying. At one time he must have been fat, for the skin hung from his cheeks and chin in loose folds. He smoked a long cigar, which he sucked with a sort of affectionate inhalation of breath, like a soft kiss breathing through the room. On a corner of the table he had deposited his sword, with the supporting belt and silken sash of his rank, and his helmet, with the long spike, the individual lightning rod, as the quick-witted lads of the village named it.

The major waited almost two minutes before speaking, keeping his gaze on the eyes of Jules. At last, he spoke, two words—

"Sit down—"

Jules sank into the chair nearest him. Wegstetten was again silent. The young sergeant had gone to another table, probably to write down the conversation.

"You are Jules Darlay, the land owner whose farm was burned a few days ago, are you not?" The major's French was fluent, not a hint of accent, not the stiffly precise speech laboriously perfected by the ambitious foreigner, but a conversational, easy French, such as Jules had heard spoken by men in liberal professions who had visited the village.

As he did not reply, Wegstetten repeated the question.

"Yes, *Commandant*," Jules admitted, unable to call this soldierly man by any other title.

"There are not thirty ways to approach the question. I want you to tell me all you know about the *Francs-Tireurs*."

"Nothing."

The major lifted his eyebrows slightly. He clasped his hands together, and wafted three soft kisses into the air, followed by an equal number of smoke curls.

"Nothing?" He turned to the sergeant, and spoke a few words in German.

The non-com. left the room. While he was gone the major did not speak, but reached out and played with the metal strap of his helmet.

The door opened, and a young officer of Hussars entered the room. He halted five paces from his superior, brought his heels together, and saluted in a gesture that seemed to ripple through his body from heels to cranium, although only his hand actually moved. He had saluted as earnestly as he would have led a charge.

Wegstetten motioned for Jules to rise. A peasant could not remain seated when a Prussian was standing. He spoke to the young officer in a few sharp, guttural syllables. The Hussar answered as briefly.

"The officer said that he was given information to the effect that you were receiving members of the Raiders," the major said.

"The officer has been misinformed," Jules declared.

"Not very likely."

"I cannot admit what isn't true, can I?" Jules pointed out.

"But the officer will testify that he has it from a good source," Wegstetten, strangely enough, sheltered those blazing eyes for a moment with one hand. "From a good source— Do you remember buying wares from a peddler the night before the farm was burned?"

"Yes, *Commandant.*"

Wegstetten dismissed the Hussar, and also sent the non-com. from the room. When Jules was left alone with him, the major smiled briefly, a fleeting mirthless smile.

"Do you know what happened to the peddler?" he asked.

"No, *Commandant.* What happened?"

"I don't know. No one knows. Personally, I would like to find out."

"I cannot tell you."

"That is agreed," Wegstetten said, with a wave of his hand. "You have a family, have you not, Jules Darlay?"

"Yes, *Commandant.* A wife and two sons."

The cigar blazed vividly, then resumed its ashen tip.

"Sad thing. A widow—that's not so bad, she can remarry. But the children—"

"HE'S trying to frighten me," thought Jules, "but he can't accuse me of anything precise." Aloud he commented. "Sad thing, as you say."

"The officer of Hussars is certain of his information. In fact the peddler told him that a *Franc-Tireur* was asking about you. The lieutenant's word is better than yours, with us. I shall hold you tonight, until I can call you for trial."

"I know what that means," said Jules. His hands trembled slightly, and the strength had left his legs. He slumped into the chair.

"I'm glad you do," Wegstetten remarked. "Knowing what it means, you will probably find your way out."

"How?"

"Tell me what you know?"

"I know nothing."

Wegstetten opened the drawer of the table, drew out a fresh cigar, which replaced the stump just discarded.

"By the way, Darlay, I understand that you are completely ruined. Is that true?"

"It is."

"You invested your gain in your establishment, I believe. You have your fields left, it is true. But you'll have to sell part of your land to be able to build. I've had some land myself, in Germany. Seems like losing a leg or an eye after you've owned it for a while. You'll feel bad to see some other fellow plowing your land, that is, if you clear yourself of this suspicion."

Jules evoked the picture of himself passing on the road, seeing another man in the fields he had owned. He winced. He was at heart a plowman, and the thought of losing his land hurt him more than the thought of death.

"You know that you owe the burning of your farm to the Raiders. They played you a bad trick, Jules Darlay. I don't understand why you want to shelter them." Wegstetten paused, looking closely at Jules. "Now, how would you like to get even with them? They didn't think of you. Why should you think of them? Moreover, you need money, and there's ten thousand francs to the man who helps us rid the countryside of the pests."

"I'm not an informer," Jules retorted.

"We might make it twenty thousand in gold," the major suggested.

"Gold taken from us," Jules said defiantly.

"What do you care? Money has no country."

"But I have," Jules assured him.

"You have also two boys and a wife. A woman can remarry, I know—"

Jules clenched his fists, and shook his head as if he had been struck between the eyes. Wegstetten knew how to lash a man.

"Let her! What do I care, after I'm dead."

"You could remain with her, and the sons, with money enough to buy another home."

"No."

"It's a lot of money. But what's money compared to a man's life? Before you hold out longer I tell you the limit assigned me has been reached. Twenty-five thousand? Isn't that enough?"

"It isn't a question of enough or not enough," Jules replied.

"You could sell your land, and with the twenty-five thousand go away, and start anew, with more land, a larger house."

"I tell you I don't know—"

Wegstetten leveled a finger at him.

"You do. You live in the woods. The *Francs-Tireurs* have to obtain food somewhere. Do you or do you not leave baskets of food in your barns for them?"

"Who said so?"

"Yourself, just now."

Jules' head was reeling. He could not clearly recall what he had said. The figures kept dancing before his eyes—twenty-five thousand francs. A new start, education for his children.

"If you have a relative among the *Francs-Tireurs*, just let me know," Wegstetten said with rough kindness. "I promise to do my best to prevent harm coming to him, and when he is our prisoner, to spare him and send him to Germany until the end of the war."

"My men folks are dead," said Jules. "The last one fell in Alsace, in August."

The major nodded—

"Fell like a soldier. He would have nothing but scorn for those fellows you won't give up."

"They are Frenchmen."

"You repeat that over and over, to try and forgive them for the harm they've brought upon you." Wegstetten leaned over the table confidentially. "I'll keep your secret. You keep mine, Darlay. I've been getting the —— from headquarters. I am no longer a young man with time to waste. It's time I had a regiment. And being outwitted by these irregulars will hold me back. Von Werder won't listen to excuses. Out of my own pocket I will add five thousand francs. And you have nothing much to tell me—their meeting place. I'll do the rest."

Jules twisted his fingers violently. His hat, forgotten, dropped to the floor. Suddenly, he stood up.

"No, I won't do it, I won't do it," he muttered, more to himself than to Wegstetten, who sat, still perfectly calm, behind his table blowing little bluish puffs.

Jules tore at his collar, and walked the length of the room several times. Each time he turned he felt the major's eyes upon him. He had the very clear impression that the German was driving his will on to overwhelm his own. The hypnotic steadiness of glance frightened him. He wanted to run out and conceal himself where that suave voice could not follow.

It was as if those thirty thousand francs were a post to which his soul was tied. Strive as he did to free himself, he felt drawn back. He liked money so much, the money he had sweated out of himself and his land. And Wegstetten was right. The Raiders had not thought of him when they killed near his farm.

Yes, several times he had fed them, when they had dragged themselves, half starved to his back door. And one of them had evidently talked freely to a peddler, who had in turn talked to the Hussar.

Blood-money brought bad luck, he had heard. But he had had bad luck without accepting blood-money. He laughed bitterly. Bad luck. And it was only beginning, for what worse luck could befall a man than to be shot, with the thought well planted in his mind that his widow would love another, and that his children would be destitute. There were his sisters, but they had families of their own. And children taken in from charity are made to feel humiliated.

Wegstetten had risen, and was standing before a map pinned to the wall. He motioned for Jules to come near. And when Jules was at his side he felt very small, for the major dominated him physically as well as mentally. Jules, a big man, felt dwarfed. The German, dropping his formality, laid a hand on his shoulder, and indicated the circle which represented Echezbeau on the map.

"Take a pencil, Darlay, and mark the place, approximatively."

Jules still hesitated. Wegstetten went to the table and picked up a pencil. This he thrust into the peasant's hand.

"Go on. Go on."

Jules wiped the moisture from his face.

"The people know I came to see you. They'll know it's me," he said.

Wegstetten grinned:

"I see your mind is made up. Don't worry. You're presumed to be above suspicion." He pushed Jules roughly into a chair. "Less fuss! You have it in you to talk. Talk!"

Around Jules the room floated dizzily. He scarcely knew what he was saying. The words jerked out in an automatic flow. He forgot the money, he forgot his wife. He thought only of fields that must not be lost.

"Two and one-half kilometers from Echezbeau, there is a place once used as a stone quarry—" his voice droned steadily.

Wegstetten wrote. And Jules watched the glowing red of his cigar tip, and the glowing silver of the spike. His heart beat painfully with rumbles as if of a breaking mechanism.

CHEERING news had been brought to the Raider's camp. The French troops were advancing. There had been a brush between them and a half battalion of Baden grenadiers, which had ended in the retreat of the latter. The informer even said that the leaders in Langres and Besançon were shaking off their lethargy, that very soon a move would be made against Dijon. The Germans were tiring of the war. Their first enthusiasm had dwindled to a tiny flame, ran the reports. It was becoming known in Germany for the first time that the Prussian guard had been almost annihilated at St. Privat, under the walls of Metz.

The hasty levies of Frenchmen were being whipped into shape, and, with a new government and new leaders, another attempt could be made. The peace terms offered by Germany, learned no one knew from what source, claimed the so-called German-speaking province, Alsace, and part of Lorraine. A mutilation of France could not be tolerated. The war would go on until the Prussians gave up these pretentions.

Vieges listened with a sceptical smile. His men, glad to clutch even at a straw in the inundation of defeat rising about them, listened greedily, eyes shining. France could not be beaten when she did not want to be. Darlay wanted to believe, and was annoyed with Vieges for discounting the tales just received. France had performed miracles before. What had been done could be done. Surely the Germans of today were the Germans of yesterday, and the French had not changed at heart.

In spite of himself, he became lost in day-dreams. Victorious armies were taking the tricolor flag to the banks of the Rhine. The German army, crumbling suddenly, its extended lines of communications cut and fragmented, was crushed by the manhood of France. He was young, and nothing seemed too marvelous to happen.

He suffered, as did the others, with exposure and hunger. His hands were swollen and red, and in spite of the belt tightened to the last hole around his waist, he had a sensation of floating in the middle, with an occasional sharp, twisting pain. Bacon and hard bread had given out. The peasants, frightened by the threats of the troops in Echezbeau, did not bring food to the appointed spots. An adventurous group of the Raiders had invaded a farmhouse and looted the hen-coop.

"We'll soon be eating each other!" had been a humorous remark.

Three days after the burning of the supply train Vieges returned late to the cleft. The little notebook appeared. Darlay shivered, not altogether from cold.

"You know that young Hussar Saraud was after the day he met you, I got him. Five kilometers from here—on the slope. Between the eyes; they threw him across his horse and led him back."

Darlay recalled that he had noticed that the officer had wrinkled his brows, as if expecting a bullet to strike there. Premonition?

Vieges mechanically sought for tobacco, but remembered that his provision was exhausted. He glanced appealing to Darlay who also shook his head.

"No tobacco! —— them!" the doctor uttered heartily. He moved restlessly for a moment, then asked bluntly, "What about your departure?"

"I'd better wait. The French will be masters here very soon."

"You believe in those old women tales?" Vieges indicated the wall of the cleft: "The gold is still there. Take Gregaud tomorrow, he'll lead you safely."

"I suppose there'll be no chance to see my brother. Do you think he knows I'm with you?"

"How could he? The only man from your village was Proust. But he hasn't come back to us. His farm was burned, and his wife scolded him for risking his life. Guess he's more afraid of her than of the Prussians. Anyhow, Jules is more or less under watch. He couldn't come out to speak with you."

"Under watch?"

"Like Proust and a couple of others. I spoke with an old woman from Echezbeau. But while willing to listen to whatever she told, I did not want to entrust her with a message for Jules. Listen, Darlay. But don't talk. That's a good rule."

"Which, if followed, would make this a silent world."

Vieges rolled himself in an old blanket

and shaded his eyes with his hat. His white beard, uncut for months, spread over his chest. The mustache lifted gently with each heavy breath.

The night was clear, and the black sheet of the sky studded with the myriad sparkles of the stars. Around the nearest fire four men were playing cards. They chewed sticks or sucked pebbles, for all of them were smokers who lacked tobacco. There was a mild discussion, because one man had suggested another had cheated, and was now explaining he had not meant exactly what the term implied, losing himself in a long drawn-out ramble.

Darlay stretched out fully, wrapped in his greatcoat.

When he awoke, the fires had almost died out. The card players and the story-tellers were asleep. Stentorian snoring came from wide-open throats, long vibrating squeals, short, grumbling snorts. The stars were still visible, although the sky had paled. Dawn was not far off. He tried to find a more comfortable spot on the ground, one more compromising, more adapted to the curves of the human body.

Unable to find ease of mind or body, he reached out toward a near-by object, Vieges' water bottle, which was filled with cherry alcohol. This would neither warm him nor stop his hunger. But for a brief period of imagination he might feel comfortable enough to get to sleep and sleep until daylight.

The effect of the fluid pouring into his empty stomach was instantaneous. New vigor flowed into his limbs. He knew that in fifteen minutes, unless he renewed his potion, he would be worse off than before, but the temporary relief was welcome. He was unusually keen of sight and hearing. Perhaps, being more conscious of his surroundings his eyes had become accustomed to the night, and his ears to the many noises of the woods.

THIS was but one of hundreds of nights he had spent in the open. However, something was missing tonight. What? He puzzled over the question. Lack of security. He felt unprotected. Why? Partly because he was out of his element, the regular army—partly because there were no sentries. After midnight, every man turned in. When he had pointed out this carelessness to Vieges, he had been answered in the usual manner—the Prussians found the woods unhealthy at night, and never moved from their quarters. Who would be foolish enough to give up a warm bed for a fruitless and dangerous chase through the forest?

But Darlay presumed that a more enterprizing officer should come to Echezbeau, or that the one now in charge was pushed to action by superior orders. Failure would mean nothing save added fatigue to the soldiers, whose fatigue does not count in time of war. Success would mean safety to the patrols, and probably high reward for the chief.

Leaving behind all equipment save rifle and bayonet, without any metal parts to clink and jingle, wading through the knee-high snow, approach could be made noiselessly. The battalion of Baden infantry was strong in number, carried the full quota of one thousand men. It would be like the stroke of a rake. A few of the raiders might escape, but the others would be taken.

Darlay laughed at his fears. To attack them, to surround them, the Germans would have to know their exact location. And who was to tell them? There were those among the peasants who knew, but they were Frenchmen.

So strong was imagination, he thought he heard the stealthy advance of a strong party of men. No precise sounds, a vague rumor, like the panting breath of whispered conversation. He knew that a man listening for sounds in the dark will hear them.

He started. This time there was no mistake. He had heard the dull crunch of a boot breaking through a frozen surface of the snow. But the step was not repeated, and he remained where he was propped on one elbow, unwilling to give the alarm, with the belief already shaping in his mind that he had dreamed.

This impression became stronger as the moments passed, and finally, he fell asleep.

When he opened his eyes Vieges was standing up, stretching his arms high.

"Another night passed, Darlay. I wonder how many more there will be for me."

Vieges picked up a stick, and stirred the nearest fire. A few sparks flew up and under the gray ashes, embers glowed.

A flash from above, the unmistakable crack of a Dreyse rifle, and the embers, scattered in all directions by the bullet, traced glowing arcs through the air. A hail of lead followed, slanting from the rim of the cleft. There were dull thuds on the ground, sharp crackling among the piles of wood, and the softer impact of metal striking flesh.

Darlay had seized his rifle and fired the first shot blindly upward. Vieges crouched, as if to protect his stomach, held his shotgun ready, waiting for a target. The Raiders were running about, bumping into each other, tripping and falling.

"The Prussians—sacred ——!"

"Where's my gun?"

Curses strung out in explosive succession.

Vieges, after the first bewildered gesture, straightened to the full height, threw his hat to the ground. He thought first of his men.

"Scatter—don't try to fight in here—we're trapped. Each man for himself!"

The Raiders ran up the lower slopes but met the infantry coming down with fixed bayonets, drunk with blood rage. Butts rose and fell in hand to hand encounter. Revolver in hand, Darlay was confronted by a bulky shadow, and fired. This first man went down. Vieges was not far off, still yelling his orders. Darlay fired the six cartridges, then bent to pick up a rifle. By this time, there were many laying about without owners.

He was forced back against the incline of the cleft. He parried and lunged out desperately. For seven years he had been handling a bayoneted rifle, and possessed more experience than his foes. The troopers, bewildered by this unexpected resistance, fell back a few steps. Darlay used a trick learned from the Turcos. He fell headlong to the ground, and when the others rushed forward to finish him, leaped ahead and through them.

Hands clutched at his shoulders but he freed himself.

Vieges, whirling his shotgun by the barrels, was the center of a milling group. Darlay went to his help, bringing butt and blade into play.

"Get out of it, young man," Vieges suggested, coolly. "There's no use—"

He sank to his knees from a blow on the shoulder. The weapon he had used escaped his grip.

A tall figure, dominating the others came forward and covered Darlay with a revolver.

"Surrender," he said. "I could drop you with one shot."

Darlay hesitated. In that moment of uncertainty a private took possession of his Chassepot. A meaty fist caught him between the eyes, bells rang, lights crackled, and he lost all interest in the world—

THE column, with the prisoners in the center, entered Echezbeau before eight o'clock that morning. As they marched the Germans sang. The new sun caught on hundreds of bayonets, gleamed on the spiked helmets. The joy of the troops in the village was exuberant. Hussars, Uhlans and infantrymen mingled in a chorus of deep cheers. One might have thought that news had come that Paris had fallen. Even the officers relaxed from their customary coldness of manner, and grinned back at the privates. The Raiders were dispersed. The roads would be safe.

Darlay, his head still ringing, walked beside Vieges. The doctor was silent, but he looked about as alertly as ever.

Darlay caught sight of familiar faces, persons he had known years before. The inhabitants lined the single street of the village, gazing mournfully at the blood-stained, ragged defenders of the soil. As men among the *Francs-Tireurs* were recognized, he could hear their names whispered, sometimes accompanied by sobs. For many young people married out of the villages they lived in, thus establishing a blood bond with other families.

A woman tore through the ranks of the Germans and clutched at a tall, rangy man, who walked with his head bowed, arms pinioned behind his back. She screamed and clung to him, as rough hands grasped her and pushed her away. At last a gun-butt rose in the air, came down against her chest and she reeled back and fell in the snow. The truculent old peasant who had defied Wegstetten the day before stepped forward, picked her up, grumbling his disgust. A Hussar, standing near-by, leaped forward, grasped his saber by the middle and brought the heavy metal pommel against the peasant's chin. Blood flowed.

The officers had ridden ahead, and only the privates and non-coms. were left. The sight of blood and the remembrance of the men they had known killed from ambush drove them suddenly mad. On the prisoners butt blows rained, kicks, punches. Darlay was knocked down.

Vieges, his beard blood-stained and muddied, spread his feet wide apart and thrust his face forward defiantly.

"Come on, you brutes! I've paid for it."

Another blow caught him on the cheekbone, and he whirled and fell forward like an empty sack collapsing. He squirmed to his knees and stood up. Darlay was also on his feet by now. If the Germans had given way to the madness of striking the prisoners, the prisoners, too, had lost restraint. They taunted their captors, cursed and defied them. A word was immediately paid by a blow, but that word was spoken. A sort of drunken frenzy swept through the men, Germans and French.

A Dreyse cracked. One of the prisoners was killed. Darlay thought he saw death coming, and tried to put up as bold a front as his dilapidated appearance and puffed face would allow. The blood from his smashed nose and cuts on his cheeks tasted flat and warm in his mouth. He was half choked by the flow, his body was numb and he trembled in long quivering shivers. Snow had found its way down his collar and wet his clothing. He was chilled to the bone. Death would have been a relief.

He looked squarely at the nearest soldier who probably was not a bad fellow at heart, when calm. Blue eyes, red face, with a down of mustache struggling on his upper lip, and golden hair glinting on his chin.

"*Prussen kaput*—(The Prussians are done for—!" Alfred informed him.

"*Nein!*" exclaimed the other, "*Frankreich kaput!*" And swung his rifle-butt.

Darlay, struck in the stomach, fell, writhing with pain. There would have undoubtedly followed the massacre of the Raiders, had not an officer appeared, attracted by the shouts of men, the screams of women.

He snapped his fingers, spoke a few words in a level tone, and the soldiers quieted, shamefacedly picking up the battered prisoners. Vieges was spitting blood upon the snow.

"What did he say?" Darlay asked.

"That they should be ashamed of themselves."

The officer had looked quickly in Darlay's direction. Seeing the uniform, the gold stripes on the sleeves, he smiled, nodded and after a brief moment of hesitation, lifted two fingers to the vizor of the small cap he wore instead of the cumbersome helmet.

Doctor Vieges laughed sardonically—"Your breed knows itself!"

"Go on, go on!" suggested the private who had struck Darlay.

Having seen his officer salute Darlay, he considered him of more importance than the others, and brushed the *képi* with his sleeve, putting it back on Darlay's head.

"Dirty before — now clean —" he said, proud of the few French words he knew.

The prisoners were taken into a church, and found resting places on the benches. On the steps leading to the altar a squad of Germans was camped, smoking and drinking. The place offered a strange aspect. The sun streamed through the stained-glass windows. A great gilded crucifix spread protecting arms. The reek of human flesh, of old boots and greasy sausage emanated from every corner, struggling for mastery against the thick tobacco smoke.

For the first time Darlay had opportunity to count the prisoners. To his amazement, there were but eleven.

"A lot of us got away," he remarked to Vieges.

"Not as many as you'd think. I heard the officer say they found eighteen bodies, shot down in that first volley or killed trying to get through. There are also the wounded, who will not be able to get far. Our band is finished. As for the Germans, they lost three—and perhaps four or five with light wounds." Vieges laughed. "The winning side always comes out better. We got a score the other day, and lost two killed."

The door of the church opened a few minutes later, and the lieutenant who had saluted Darlay entered. He glanced casually over the prisoners and spoke to their guards, who cut the ropes binding the arms. The prisoners beat their hands against their sides to send the blood into the numbed members.

With the officer was a non-com. Darlay could not quite discover his rank, puzzled by the insignia. But he presumed him to be equivalent to a French sergeant-major. This man counted the prisoners carefully, three times, and then wrote in a notebook. Smaller than the average German in the village, he held himself erect, striving to equal the height of the officer he was following. He inquired in French from several of the men whether they were in need of medical assistance. All refused. Vieges, proclaiming his quality as a "man of the art," asked for bandages and instruments. These were brought to him, and the wounded accepted from him the aid they had refused from the Germans. It seemed absurd for Vieges to be painstakingly dressing wounds on men who would be hanged. But humanity has strange lapses in war time.

"Officer?"

Darlay glanced up.

The lieutenant was standing over him, and reached forward with one hand to touch the double braid on the Frenchman's sleeve.

"Yes," Darlay agreed.

"You wear a uniform," he glanced at the other prisoners, at their scarcely military attire. "You're different from those fellows."

"I'm one of them."

"Nevertheless, I'll see what I can do," the other replied. "I have given orders that you be fed. You all look hungry."

"Thank you—"

The German nodded, in a not unfriendly manner, and left, followed by the non-com., who was still jotting figures in the note-book.

Darlay approached Vieges. The doctor, washing out a cut across a man's arm, looked up from his bloody task.

"I DON'T altogether blame you, Darlay, because you're young. And jiggling at the end of a length of hemp is not a pleasing pastime. But we all felt rather cheapened when you asked a favor from that Prussian. He said he'd do all he could for you, and instead of telling him to go to ——, you thanked him."

"I thanked him because he proposed to feed us all!"

"Oh, that was it—"

The guards had brought in a large cast-iron stove for their cooking, and also to warm up the big place, drafty and cold as a tomb. To let the pipe out of the building, a hole was knocked in one of the stained-glass panels.

Seated before the stove, in shirt sleeves, was a stout, good-natured private. He was taking the skin from a sausage, with a large clasp knife, and eating bits of meat with relish.

"Knife?" Darlay asked, extending his hand.

The man demurred, fearing that the Frenchman might make use of the small blade in a way detrimental to his well being.

Darlay looked about until he found a piece of glass from the window. This he used as a knife to rip the braid from his sleeves and shoulders, and the brass buttons from his tunic and coat. Then he tossed the ornaments into the fire. Darlay then took out his commission which he tore into scraps.

Vieges approached with a pan of water to be set to warm on the stove.

"What's that you're tearing up?" he asked.

"My commission."

"Your—what!"

"My commission," repeated Darlay. "I won't need it any more.

Vieges dropped the pan and clutched his arm.

"You —— fool!" He passed his long fingers through his white hair. "Good God, I didn't know you'd do that. I—we—Oh, ——! Why did you do it? We all like you. We'd like to see you get out."

Darlay found himself speaking thickly, when he saw moisture roll down the doctor's battered features.

"It doesn't make much difference. I wanted to be one of you—and now—well, I'll take what the others take."

"You may have torn up your chance to live," Vieges went on. "Why didn't I think you'd do this. I should have known, given half a chance, you'd do a crazy fool thing like this!"

Darlay had thrown the pieces of paper on the fire. His proof that he was an officer went up in a vivid, if tiny flame.

"You know, Doctor, any man may die. But to die with an elegant gesture is a luxury." Alfred Darlay paused. "I always liked luxuries," he concluded.

THAT afternoon the prisoners were led to the village inn, where the court martial was to be held. The tap-room, which Darlay remembered so well, had been transformed into a hall of justice.

Major Wegstetten sat behind a large table, flanked by two captains of his own battalion. There was also a heavy-set man in a light-blue coat trimmed with gold, a Bavarian dragoon lieutenant. There were present also the new lieutenant of Hussars, arrived that day from Port-sur-Saone to replace the leader slain by Vieges, and a lanky lieutenant of Uhlans, commanding men of that corps in the village.

Before Wegstetten was a decanter of water and a glass. Three cigars were laid neatly side by side. The other officers were evidently not fond of water, for they had before them slender bottles of wine and glasses perched upon long stems. They also smoked. On the sideboard were the remnants of a dinner which had been composed of many dishes. Probably the staff had celebrated the capture of the Night-Raiders before meeting for the court martial.

Vieges entered the room first. Before his enemies, he had recovered his poise, and impassively returned the glances leveled at him. The lieutenant who had spoken to Darlay in the church was present, but did not have a place at the central table. He sat at a makeshift writing desk, made of a plank across the back of two chairs, and was taking notes.

It was he who motioned to the *Francs-Tireurs* to sit on the benches along the wall. The Bavarian officer shouted, and the innkeeper's wife appeared with another bottle to replace the one just finished by the cavalrymen. As she picked up the empty container, her eyes chanced to rest on Darlay. Her lips parted and, the bottle escaping her, fell to the floor and shattered on the planking.

The Bavarian rose, grumbling, and waited until she had brought a broom and dust-pan to gather the glass fragments. She left the room with a last bewildered glance at Alfred Darlay. She was some sort of a cousin to his mother and had always been fond of him. She, alone of all the men and women who had seen him since he entered the village, had recognized him, in spite of the changes brought by the years.

The incident closed, Wegstetten spoke in German, to the officer at the desk, who replied in an uncertain manner and turned and summoned the sergeant-major. The latter was questioned, and replied in the negative, receiving a tongue-lashing from the officer.

"He forgot to search for our papers," Vieges translated in a low voice.

The prisoners were told to stand up, and the sergeant-major carefully collected all papers, notebooks and personal articles with the exception of pipes and watches. This collection was laid on the major's desk. The papers passed from hand to hand, those who could read French translating to the others. Vieges' notebook, which he had not destroyed in spite of opportunity to do so, attracted attention. Wegstetten read the entries aloud, and the names were supplied by the officers.

When Wegstetten picked up the envelope given the doctor by the peddler before his execution, Vieges stood up and went to the table, saluting, not as a soldier but as a civilian, with a courtly bow. He spoke in German, doubtless explaining the source of the letter. The officers looked at Wegstetten, who suddenly sat erect in his chair, and bit his lips. Then the major slipped the envelope, unopened, within his tunic.

"Thank you," he said to Vieges.

The notebook again was passed around and the names of the doctor's victims were written beside the entries.

"Twenty-eight," Wegstetten pronounced, in a cold voice. "All yours, monsieur?"

Vieges stood up again, and bowed.

"All mine, Major."

"You must be a remarkably good shot."

"I did what I could, Major. Doubtless, there was inspiration to be thanked for my success. I could scarcely miss, for my gun pointed at the Prussians, as a compass needle seeks the north."

"You are a man of good education," Wegstetten went on. "I am surprized to find you in such company."

"Despite their ignorance of Greek and Latin—and of your own harmonious tongue—" Vieges retorted, without a smile to point up his sarcasm— "I found them all able to handle guns. In fact, I was tolerated not for my education, but for my ability to fire a cartridge not altogether wide of the mark."

"You are aware, of course, of the punishment for your crimes?"

"Any one who has traveled in this region since your arrival must be aware of that, Major. What is it to be—shall I be burned alive by the Uhlans, or hanged up by the jaw by the Hussars? I have discovered the bodies of my men with sufficient evidence to prove both these punishments in use among your very disciplined, very civilized forces."

There was a stir among the officers, but

Wegstetten motioned for them to remain quiet.

"There is an opportunity for one of you men to escape with his life," the major resumed. "A sum of one hundred thousand francs in gold was seized from a supply train. The first to give me information as to the place of concealment of that money will have his sentence commuted to five years in prison."

There were among the prisoners several married men, fathers. But the major waited and no answer came.

"The offer is not open to this gentleman," Wegstetten indicated Vieges. "His crimes are too numerous. And it is open only for fifteen minutes. If, at the end of that time, no information is forthcoming, I shall not listen later."

He drained a glass of water, and poured another from the decanter. Turning toward the officer on the right, he conversed in a low voice, occasionally glancing at the clock on the wall.

Darlay saw his cleverness. Wegstetten was giving them time to be tempted, but not sufficient time to think better of a first decision. Given but fifteen minutes, the desperate impulse to survive might break down the will of one of the prisoners. But the clock ticked away the allotted number of minutes, and no one spoke.

"Too late, now," said Wegstetten. He addressed the doctor— "You admit your crimes?"

"If patriotism is a crime, I admit it with pride."

"You shall be hanged tomorrow morning."

"What matters the road, when the destination is the same?" Vieges accepted philosophically.

GREGAUD was questioned next. He tried to be as witty as the doctor, to show the same cool courtesy. He described his participation in the attacks, exaggerating, rather than subduing, the part he had played. The strain at calmness became too hard for him to endure, and he concluded with a resounding oath an appreciation of his judges.

"You bunch of slobs! *Vive l'empereur!*"

"You shall be hanged tomorrow morning," Wegstetten assured him.

The next man questioned confessed in a low voice, smiled nervously when Wegstetten condemned him to share the common fate.

The tension among the prisoners was such that the doctor burst out in protest.

"Major, why torture those poor fellows! Your decision was taken before we were captured."

"But, monsieur, we strive to be just, and wish every man to have a chance to speak for himself."

"I have not seen the men captured after their escape from the cleft," Vieges went on. "I guess your men were more humane than you are and finished them without further ado."

"Probably," Wegstetten admitted courteously. "I can scarcely blame them. The sniping has brought our nerves to the breaking point."

"We wish nothing more than their fate, as quickly as possible," the doctor informed the court martial. "Send us a priest, and have it over with."

"We wish the hangings to be public," Wegstetten made clear. "After that example, your people will be less likely to ambush our patrols."

"You might as well try to end wars by showing soldiers battlefields," Vieges muttered. "We may go now? We have but a few hours to live, and would like to spend them out of sight and sound of your kind."

Wegstetten ignored his request, and called for Darlay to stand up.

"You are an officer of *Mobiles?*"

"No, sir."

"This officer—" he indicated the lieutenant at the table, "—saw you in your uniform." The major's eyes traveled down to the missing buttons and braid. "I understand. You wish to share the fate of your comrades."

"I do."

"Why did you join these—these Raiders?"

"This is my own village. I was born here. You are here."

Wegstetten hesitated—

"If you prefer the firing squad, I'll grant your request."

"I'll share the rope with the others."

"What is your name?"

"Alfred Darlay."

Wegstetten reached for the glass of water and drained it.

"Who is your nearest of kin in the village?"

"My brother, Jules Darlay."

The major lowered his eyes, and looked long at his hands clasped on the table. He was about to dismiss the prisoners, when the Bavarian officer, who had been drinking heavily during the trial, rose to his feet, and lifted his glass. He spoke in guttural French—

"To France's defeat!"

Several of his companions protested, dragged him into his seat. Wegstetten frowned in his direction. But the Bavarian drank, nevertheless, replacing the glass on the table with a loud crash.

Vieges, before anyone could stop him, stepped forward, and picked up the glass. It had held the last of the bottle, and purplish dregs clung to the bottom, with a few drops of the liquid.

"The dregs of defeat!" Vieges shouted. "We know how to take them, as we know how to drink the clear wine of victory!" He raised the glass to his lips and drank. "We hold our wine well in this country," he concluded, addressing the Bavarian.

The soldiers had entered to take the prisoners back to the church.

BAD news travels swiftly. Although a pass was needed to go from one village to another, messengers risked the penalties of fine or imprisonment. The relatives of the *Francs-Tireurs* disregarded danger of reprisal and flocked to Echezbeau. Mothers, wives, sisters, small children, came from all directions on the wind-swept roads, through the snow.

The German privates, the blood-lust slackened within them, were gruffly gentle, and offered consolations in broken French. But a woman about to lose a son or a husband is not quieted by statements that war is war, and that one must accept what fate sends to all human beings. A sobbing woman tried to break past the sentries at the inn to beg the major's mercy. But an officer came out, gave a brief order, and the privates became once more automatons, devoid of pity. They brushed the women aside with gun butts and soon became impatient.

Wegstetten appeared on the stoop of the inn. He declared that no power on earth could save the prisoners, that they had been justly condemned for confessed crimes. He hoped, he added, that this would prove a lesson to the others; that the women would see to it that the men remained home and followed peaceful pursuits, instead of giving way to a blind desire for excitement. War was not a game, he concluded, and it was an iron law that he who killed should pay.

The scene threatened to lengthen interminably, unless some privilege was granted, small but sufficient to break the first surge of resentment. Wegstetten probably feared that if force were once found necessary a massacre might follow. Possibly he recalled the events at Bazailles, and the protest addressed the German government by neutrals.

It would be possible, he said, for persons who had relatives among the prisoners to see them.

They waited to hear no more, but followed a non-com. to the church, where they were permitted to enter in small groups for periods of ten minutes.

Darlay looked in vain for his brother. Jules did not appear. Perhaps the woman at the inn had not yet told him. He decided this was just as well. What was the use of wearing himself out with emotion, when he would need steady nerves to die decently in the morning. Gregaud, with his wife clinging to his neck, his two children clasping one leg each, sobbed. Great tears seared through the dirt on his face. And between sobs he cursed.

Vieges had daughters, but they were away in southern France. His wife was probably ignorant of the situation. The news could not have yet reached Vesoul. Darlay joined him.

"This is dreadful," he said.

"Not unusual," Vieges said. "Since the war broke out, throughout France and Germany there have been scenes like this; but strictly private. Outside, when the troops were marching off, one kept a stiff upper lip, and shouted, 'On to Berlin' or 'On to Paris.' After each battle in thousands of homes women are crying."

Gregaud's family had been driven out, and the big fellow was slumped on a bench, his head in his arms, weeping like a small child. Darlay and Vieges tried to hearten him, but they could not promise him life, and that was what he desired.

A bit of information, brought by one of the visitors, spread among the prisoners, as the fall of a stone ripples the surface of water.

"Von Werder is evacuating Vesoul—the Prussians will leave the region!"

Elation took the place of sorrow.

More details were learned. The French army of the East was at last moving. Bourbaki, Cremer, Garibaldi were united. The troops from Langres were very close to the vicinity, their advanced patrols had skirmished with the Uhlans from Echezbeau not an hour before. As proof, the Germans had brought back the bodies of two comrades. A battalion of *Mobiles* and another volunteer corps, which had come from far off Brittany were taking position to storm Echezbeau on the next day.

How the informer had found these details, no one questioned. News had a mysterious way of seeping through. A detachment of soldiers was already knocking loopholes in the walls facing the northwest. Darlay and others listened and, in fact, the sounds of unusual activity came from the end of the street.

Victory was in sight. With Von Werder's forces thrown back, Belfort was relieved, the line of communication split in two. With a few victories under their belts, the French would forget the early defeat. It was an awakening. France trembled and gathered herself to throw off the invasion.

"We die too soon," some one said.

"No, we've done our part," another corrected.

In spite of these words, a sudden wild hope flared up among them. They could not believe that they would die, now, with success at hand for France. They wanted to live on, and see.

"If somebody could get through to those battalions and tell them about us," suggested Gregaud. "They would advance the time of attack, and in the upset, we might be forgotten."

"We're only eleven," Darlay said. "And eleven men are of no importance. The battalion commanders have orders from the general, and would not move. They could not jeopardize several hundred men and the success of a strategic turn, for us."

To his surprize, Vieges was hopeful.

"They are Frenchmen," he said, "and would not allow us to hang."

Darlay, tired of talking without action, located the fellow who had brought the important news. He was not what might have been wished for a messenger. He limped, and was too old for prompt action. But as his son was one of the men to be hanged, it was certain that he would do his best.

Jokes were exchanged, jokes that would have been impossible a few minutes before, jokes referring to the rope, and the little dance performed by men who were strung from a branch. Not one of the prisoners would believe that matters would not take the turn they hoped for.

"You tell them that we count on them," Vieges insisted. By ——, it would be stupid to die now!"

The volunteer messenger embraced his son with a cheering word and was about to take his leave.

"Don't tell the women," he was advised. "They can't hold their tongues."

True, it was a woman's talk who dashed their hopes. Had it not been for her, they would have passed an expectant night instead of a gloomy wake.

"No, I can't go home now!" she cried. "They won't let us. After we leave here, they lock us up in the school-house. The major said that no one who spoke to the prisoners should go until he gave the word."

JULES DARLAY sat before the fireplace, toasting chestnuts. He felt quite at peace with himself. The remorse he had dreaded, the remorse that tortures a man who has gone against his conscience, was absent from his brain and heart. True, he had not pushed his coldness to the extent of watching the *Francs-Tireurs* march through the streets, and had been disturbed by the cries and screams of the women. But he had felt detached, not at all as if he knew that he was immediately responsible for all that was happening in Echezbeau that day.

His oldest boy, Auguste, six years old, had been in the village. He was telling his mother, who was peeling vegetables for the evening meal, about the old man with the white beard who was the leader of the Raiders, and taunted the Germans. His shrill voice, punctuated by exclamations, came in a sort of monotone to Jules. His wife was asking the child to stop, as the thought of the miseries endured by the French hurt her deeply. Her brother was even now a prisoner in Germany.

The farmer who had taken Jules and his family into his home after the burning of the farm was indignant. He was whittling a boat from a piece of soft wood, and between curses answered his wife, who scolded him for littering the clean floor. The copper pans lined on the wall reflected the ruddy light placidly, and the steam that rose from the cast-iron pot hung over the fire smelled of sausage, as usual. Nothing was changed. And Jules had twenty-five thousand francs to start anew.

He had not told his wife. Women sometimes held queer ideas. She was so worried about her brother, she felt the war as a personal affliction and had been in sympathy with the Raiders. He knew that she had fed them many a time, that she had sheltered their wounded in the stable. The coming of the Germans had quite changed her. She had always been patient, and had never raised her hand to her children, although it was not the custom of mothers to be sparing with slaps and cuffs. But when the patrol had been ambushed near the farm, Jules had been forced to compel her to leave her home.

She spoke of nothing less than unearthing the shotgun Jules had buried when the patrols began to visit the farms. After that Jules felt it was wise to keep her in ignorance of his deed. She would not tell any one, of course, because she loved him—and there were the boys to be brought up. But she would reproach him. And it was not comfortable for a man to have his wife hold anything over his head, so he had always heard.

At first he had been worried for fear the neighbors would suspect him. Three days had gone by, and no one had approached him. He therefore felt safe.

His host spoke up suddenly—

"There's no getting away from it, Jules, some one gave them up, don't you think so?"

"Yes."

"I say that a scoundrel like that ought to be burned alive. Don't you think so, Jules?"

Jules lighted his pipe, and removed the shell from a chestnut.

"Yes."

"It will be easy to tell who did it," Madame Darlay remarked. "Some fellow will show up with money after the war is over, and he won't be able to explain where he got it."

"That's so," agreed the farmer. "I'll keep an eye open. Your wife's got a good head, hasn't she, Jules. Takes a woman to think of ways and means, don't you think so?"

"Yes."

Little Auguste stood up, and held his hand out thumb cocked.

"When I'm grown up I'll shoot Germans like Uncle Alfred did."

"When you grow up, maybe it's not Germans you'll shoot, but Englishmen or Austrians," Jules informed him.

"No, Germans, Germans!"

"Why not Mexicans? They shot your Uncle Auguste."

The boy hesitated, pondering over his choice.

"Mexicans are too far from here. It's easy to shoot Prussians. I've seen them bring them in, all bloody."

Jules addressed his wife.

"You want to keep the kid from talking like that," he advised. "If they hear him talk like that outside, we'll be suspected."

The woman looked up.

"Nonsense. The Prussians don't pay any attention to children."

"Yes, they do," Auguste asserted. "I was outside the inn, and the tall fellow with the sash and a flat hat—"

"He means an Uhlan—" Jules put in.

"He saw me pointing at him—" again the boy cocked his finger. "He asked me what I was doing, and I told him. Then he gave me a piece of chocolate, so I'd promise not to kill him when I was a soldier. He talks as if his words were all busted up."

"Auguste, you keep away from the inn, you hear me?" Jules said, shortly.

"Yes, papa."

The other man was following his own thoughts.

"I wonder who told them?"

"No one will ever know," said Jules. "Whoever did it will hide the money. As for myself, I don't blame any one for getting sick and tired of the *Francs-Tireurs*."

He hoped that this very open speech would dispel suspicion. Surely a man who was guilty would cry out against the informer. Nevertheless, he thought his wife was regarding him strangely. He wanted to ask what bothered her, but hesitated.

"How many times did you light that pipe?" she asked.

The innocent question startled him. He realized that his pipe had died out several times, and that he had been picking up brands from the fireplace to relight it. Usually his pipe drew well. He decided that he was too nervous to smoke, and laid the pipe on the shelf above the fireplace.

"Guess it needs cleaning," he muttered.

HE WAS not remorseful, but he feared discovery. He had hidden the gold well, and would not be foolish enough to show it. After hostilities ended it would be easy to go to Vesoul, even farther, to Besançon, and pretend to have signed notes for the amount he showed. He ran over the list of his distant relatives, to see whether he could not claim to have inherited the money. But his wife knew his family too well, and that would not work. Why look so far ahead, in any case?

There came a rap at the door.

"I guess it's our men," said the farmer.

The four Germans quartered at his home came off duty about this time. They were well behaved fellows, willing to help with the household tasks. They were well aware that the talk to be heard in the house was not always complimentary to their kind, and usually knocked before entering.

"Come in."

The door opened.

The inn-keeper's wife—Jules recognized her immediately—a good woman, but garrulous. She heard everything that went on in the village, and had been known to use the information carelessly.

Jules straightened stiffly.

"Good evening," he said, as did every one else in the room.

What was wrong with the woman, Jules wondered. Her eyes were red with weeping.

"I want to talk to you, Jules," she said.

Had she overheard his conversation with Wegstetten? A remote possibility. The floors were thick, and the rooms on the first floor occupied by military guests from the forces of occupation. Jules' wife had looked up quickly, and Jules felt cold to his finger nails. He decided to make a bold front.

"All friends," he said. "You can talk away."

"I don't know whether I ought to. It won't do any good."

Jules rose calmly, reached for the pipe, and lighted it, this time resolved not to forget to pull at the stem. Faced with danger, he found himself cool, his answers already marshaling in a logical succession. He lifted his heavy shoulders in a careless manner.

"When did you last hear from Alfred?" the woman asked.

"My brother? I got the notice of his death from the government last September?"

"Are you sure he was killed?"

"Yes. He was a member of the Seventy-Fourth of the line, and of the First Battalion. The Germans gave a list of the survivors who fell in their hands—and he was not among them. So he must have been killed."

The sense of relief he experienced was overwhelming. He wanted to talk on, and on, so certain was he of his brother's death. Probably she had heard talk of another Darlay—the name was not altogether confined to his family—and was creating a little excitement, as was her way, to make herself interesting.

"What did you hear this time?" he asked.

"I didn't hear anything," she replied.

"But the way you rushed in here—"

"I saw Alfred this afternoon. I should know him—"

"Alfred? Where?"

"Here, in Echezbeau."

"Good. Next you'll say you saw the wolf with two heads?" Jules laughed, then he became serious. "God knows, it would be good news, Josephine. But it can't be. The government sent me a notice."

"Alfred—Alfred was caught with the Raiders—"

"You're crazy!" Jules declared bluntly. "If Alfred was alive, he'd have written me."

"Letters don't come through easy."

"Josephine may be right," Madame Darlay put in. "You remember, we thought at first my brother was killed. Then, weeks later, we heard he was a prisoner."

"But he was not among the prisoners," Jules declared.

"You don't know."

"I know I'm right," Josephine insisted. "He knew me, too. That's why he shook his head for me not to speak to him."

Jules whitened.

"Josephine, you're sure it was he?" he said hoarsely.

"He looks just like Auguste used to look when he was here last."

Jules paced the room. He flung the pipe in a corner. The boy, not understanding what had happened, tried to catch his hand as he walked by, and was brushed aside ungently.

"It can't be, it can't be!" Jules repeated.

"They're letting visitors into the church," the farmer said. "Why don't you go over and find out?"

"Yes, why don't you go and look," his wife suggested.

"Go in that church? Look at those men?" Jules threw his arms high. "I couldn't."

"But if it is he, aren't you going to see him before they hang him?" Josephine insisted.

Jules still clutched at the hope of an error.

"If it was he, he'd have sent me word."

"Perhaps he wouldn't for fear you'd be annoyed by the Prussians for knowing him. Perhaps he wouldn't want to see you, after all those years, with him going to hang so soon," Josephine went on.

Jules' wife rose, and grasped his arm.

"Stop walking like that," she said sharply, "and go and find out!"

"Why are you mixing in this?" he challenged violently.

"Because you don't seem to know what to do. Either Alfred is there or he isn't. If he is, your place is with him. If he isn't, it's better to know it now. And if those fellows can stand the idea of being hanged, you should be able to stand seeing them."

"She's right, don't you think so, Jules?" the farmer said.

"Leave me be!" Jules shouted, roughly. "Don't be all talking at once."

The boy began to cry, and hearing him, the younger child came from the next room and joined in the outburst. The recent calm was gone. To Jules it appeared as if the sky had fallen upon him.

"Where's my coat?" he asked.

His wife brought the garment and held it for him. He pulled a fur cap over his head.

"I'll go and have a look—"

The door closed behind him noisily.

HE CRUNCHED through the snow crust into the center of the street. It was dark, but the eight o'clock trumpet had not yet sounded. Civilians were still at liberty to be about.

He noticed that the school-house was lighted. A passer-by informed him that any visitor to the prisoners would be locked up there for the night. He wished to turn back, to warn his wife that he might be absent for several hours. Then he decided that he would make certain of his brother's presence among the Raiders.

He felt no wish to see Alfred. It would have been much better for both brothers, he felt, if the younger had fallen on the field. A bullet or shell splinter received in action was better than a brief dangle at the end of a length of hemp. And there was the thought that he, Jules, had contributed to his brother's capture.

The inn was brilliantly lighted. Sounds of clashing crockery, of tinkling glasses, of deep-throated singing, came from the windows. He heard the unmistakable pop of a cork from a champagne bottle. However, he noted unusual activity. Horses were saddled, hitched before the inn. A company of infantry was drawn up in the village place for inspection. An officer in charge was having knapsacks opened before his eyes, was counting the cartridges in the belt boxes.

Before the church, he was forced to elbow his way through a milling mob. The loud outcries had ceased. The faces he saw were dazed, almost blank, as if struggling to awaken from a deep sleep.

At the door he halted. He informed the sentry that he merely wished to look in, to see if he knew any one. The soldier argued against this, saying that his orders had not given him a course to follow in case of such a request. Jules felt in his pocket, and produced a five-franc piece. Even for such a purpose, he felt reluctant to part with his silver. But he had to be sure. The sentry swiftly pocketed the coin, and opened the door a few inches.

Jules leaned forward.

Alfred was there, in the center of the group, talking animatedly.

Deep within him, Jules felt a queer, dull shock. The vision he had held for years of his younger brother vanished, and was replaced by this new man. Here was no light-hearted boy talking grandly of winning a general's stars in a few years, but a man who had suffered, and who faced death with a smile.

Stupefying, absurd, a sensation of deep pride gripped Jules. Yes, the boy had made good. He looked the part, he was a soldier. And an officer from the cut of his coat. The others seemed to listen to him with respect.

The sentry closed the door.

"Either go in or go away," he grunted.

Jules left.

He walked with uncertain step for a few yards, then turned and stared back at the church, the church where Alfred had been baptized. And now fate intended to keep him there the last few hours of his life! And he, Jules, would be the cause of it.

They had been three brothers, and tomorrow but one would be left.

He found himself before the door of his new home, and he went in.

"Well?" his wife asked.

He nodded several times.

"It's Alfred, all right."

Josephine began to weep.

"What's the matter?" Jules asked. "We had already given him up as dead."

"It seems more terrible, right here, in his own home."

Jules smiled faintly. She did not know all. He himself did not know why he did not beat his head and shriek what was inside of him, what was gnawing at his tongue to be freed. Judas, he was a Judas. The worst name that could be applied to a man he had to accept as his own. He had sold his brother for money. He looked at his two boys. What a dreadful thing—to think that one might grow up to sell the other to his foes. If he knew that he'd much prefer to take a knife and finish them where they stood.

His brow wrinkled and he breathed heavily. His wife tried to draw his face down to hers, but he released himself roughly.

"Don't! If you only knew—"

"I know— I know—you feel badly— They'll—they'll kill him—"

"Shut up—" said Jules. "You're frightening the kids."

"It's a shame, it's a shame," the farmer kept repeating. "Don't you think so, Jules?"

Jules was thinking, and did not answer. He stood in the middle of the room, with his wife clinging to him, staring at the two boys, who did not dare move from his fixed glance and remained looking up at him.

After a while he freed himself and went upstairs to his room, coming back with a package wrapped up in cloth.

"Listen—" he addressed his wife— "the Prussians lock up all the visitors for the night. I may be gone quite a while."

"I'll go with you," she offered.

"No. Better keep this among men." He held her off with one arm. "You love the kids, don't you? More than you'd love any man?"

"I—I don't understand."

"But you do!" Jules smiled slowly. "I just wanted to know."

"You're not well," she protested.

"They don't hang my brother every day," he protested.

He beckoned to his boys, picked each one up in turn, kissed them.

"You're not going to do anything crazy?" his wife insisted, alarmed by this unusual display of affection.

"No, nothing crazy, don't worry."

"You promise?"

"I promise."

He kissed her quickly.

"I've got to be going," he concluded. Once more, he looked around the room, then with a vague gesture, turned to the door.

The panel shut behind him.

IN THE few minutes Jules had stayed indoors, the snow had again begun to fall. It was as if a dark blanket had been pinned over the sky. The street was not lighted, save for the oblongs of light streaming from the windows. At the inn the outbursts of shouting had increased rather than diminished.

The inspection was over and, save for the sentries, the wide lane between the houses was deserted. These sentries knew Jules by sight, and, doubtless thinking he had a pass or would not risk coming out, failed to halt him. Jules looked about, in search of one of the soldiers quartered at his host's house. And when he succeeded in finding one of the men, by a turn of good fortune he was the one who spoke the best French.

"Karl, who is in charge of the church?" Jules asked, offering a silver coin for the information.

The private hesitated, then brushed away the proffered tip.

"I no want money," he assured Jules. "The man who commands at the church is Sergeant Kuebler."

"Do you know him?"

"Yes."

"I want to talk to him."

Karl waited for some moments, then glanced at the illuminated windows of the inn, to assure himself there was no likelihood of an officer's coming out on duty.

"Come on," Karl said.

Jules accompanied him as far as the church which loomed high in the falling snow, imprecise and shadowy. Karl spoke to the sentry, who thrust his head within the building. Kuebler, the busy non-com. who had taken the count of the prisoners, followed Karl down the steps.

"You wish to speak with me?" he asked, in fairly good French.

"Yes—in private."

Kuebler glanced at Karl and at the sentry.

"You shouldn't have spoken to these men, then," he muttered.

"How else was I to reach you?"

"That's right," agreed Kuebler. "What do you want?"

"To speak with you, alone."

Kuebler was manifestly puzzled. But he dismissed Karl with a brief order, and shouted a few words to the sentry. This done he circled the church, followed by Jules, and halted before a small house in a remote corner.

"My quarters—" he announced.

He drew a key and opened the door. Kuebler shared the two rooms with three other non-coms. There were articles of equipment hung on nails on the walls. Snores coming from the farther room, made it plain that there was no danger of interruption from Kuebler's comrades, and he quickly explained that the third was in charge of an outpost down the village street. The sergeant removed his helmet and wiped his forehead, where the leather band had squeezed the skin.

Jules laid the package on the table, and turned the flame of the single oil lamp higher.

"Are you a married man, Kuebler?"

"Yes."

"Any children?"

"Four."

"What do you do in peace time?"

"Typesetter."

"Earn much money?"

"No."

With one twist of his powerful fingers Jules snapped the stout string, unfolded the cloth, and laid bare many rolls of blue paper. He picked up one of these rolls, ripped it open and held out his hand.

In the calloused palm gleamed a heap of gold pieces.

"Five hundred francs," he said.

He was impatient to get this part of the business over. He had tried his best to imitate Wegstetten's insinuating manner, his forceful reasoning. But he could only bare the gold and let it speak for itself. Evidently, the *louis* were eloquent and spoke in loud tones to Kuebler, for the sergeant became very pale and his hands trembled.

He could scarcely speak.

"I'm not—for—sale—" he said.

Jules stretched his hand out, and mechanically the German received the gold. Then, the peasant opened another roll.

"Fifty of them," he said. "And all yours."

"That's eighteen—no, twenty—"

"Twenty-five thousand francs."

Kuebler stopped trembling, and pushed the package away resolutely.

"I will report you," he said. "I can't listen to any more."

Jules halted him with one hand:

"Hear me, Sergeant. I am not asking you to betray your country."

"Then why so much?"

"You have prisoners in the church, and you are in full charge. Let one of the prisoners go. That's all—"

Kuebler shook his head.

"Can't be done," he said. "I'd be punished. And when the officers learned I had that gold, they'd suspect me, and have me shot."

"I swear to send you the money after the war." Jules lifted his hand for the oath.

"No oaths, no promises," Kuebler said with a short laugh. "Listen, I'm a good fellow, and I could get you in a lot of trouble, but I won't. Take that home and keep quiet."

"You don't understand. I've got to get one of those men out."

"I've got to keep him in," Kuebler insisted. "And that's all."

"But why—"

"I made a tally of the prisoners. There's eleven men down on paper, and there must be eleven bodies to show." Kuebler grinned widely. "Maybe, if you could get some one to take his place—"

Jules paused, then resumed:

"Surely, before dawn, you can manage an escape. I know the man. If you'll give him half a chance he'll take it."

Kuebler could not keep his eyes from the package.

"That's impossible," he said. "I have just received orders that the prisoners are to be shot. Our battalion moves out tomorrow. Your countrymen are in this vicinity in force, and we can't waste time in fancy hangings."

"THEN there'll be no hangings?"

"No. Things will be done quickly."

"Who will be present at the executions?"

"Myself. And an officer."

"Where will it take place?"

"Against the cemetery wall, fifty feet from the church."

Jules moistened his lips—

"How will you proceed?"

"The prisoners will be brought three at a time. Twelve men will fire."

Jules removed his cap, and stood full height.

"Look at me," he said.

Kuebler regarded him attentively.

"Do you see any resemblance?"

"To the *Mobile* officer in there! You are his brother?"

"Yes."

Kuebler grasped his hand. "If it was in my power, I'd save him for nothing. I have brothers, and I know how you feel."

"Do I look enough like him to pass for him, among men who have seen him but once?"

Kuebler started.

"Yes. You're a little wider across the shoulders, perhaps a little taller. But you wouldn't—"

"Yes," Jules said stolidly, "I will be the eleventh—body."

"But there is the substitution—the ways and means—" objected Kuebler.

"And also twenty-five thousand francs to quicken your brain."

"You would have to wear his *kêpi*, and his coat. I guess no one would notice what was underneath. But, will he accept? If he's anything like you—" Kuebler faltered.

"You don't have to tell him. Give him a chance to get away, that's all."

"You're willing to give up your life to give him a chance?"

"It's not a question of will, but of must. I have my duty to do."

Kuebler twisted his knuckles until they cracked loudly.

"If I'm caught—"

"If anything happens unforeseen, you can desert—send for your wife and kids. There are other countries besides Germany. And gold speaks all languages, Sergeant."

Jules suddenly remembered his own wife and boys. This talking away his life, insisting that he face the rifles, was insane. But some urge drove him, an urge greater than he had ever felt, a blind desire to square himself with his newly-awakened conscience. Death now was preferable to life with the memory of Alfred's death.

If he allowed Alfred's blood to flow, the retribution would fall upon his head and those of his children. He was sure of this. Living as he had, close to the soil, away from the lightning influence of modern thought, his kin clung to superstitious beliefs. The old Mosaic law of an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, was rooted in Jules. All the Christian teachings had not wiped this rule from his soul. In dying for his brother, he would atone, and thus prevent his children from paying for his crime.

Kuebler was speaking. Jules became conscious of connected words.

"In about an hour, I'll call your brother into the sacristy, away from the others. I'll take him out, through the cemetery, to the back of the inn. In some way, I'll give him a chance to run into the fields. The snowfall will protect him. As for you, I'll lock you in a closet. If you make a sound, your brother's escape will be discovered."

"The priest?" Jules asked.

"The prisoners have already been permitted to speak with him, and he has gone into the school-room to pray with the men's relatives."

"So that I can't see him."

"You don't need to, after what you're doing," Keubler said slowly. "If I wasn't accepting money for this, I'd ask to shake your hand. But money is a temptation—to a poor man." Kuebler stepped to the door of the next room and looked at the sleepers.

"They're worn out," he said. "And they sleep sound. You can stay here, and just before leading your brother out, I'll come back to see if you are of the same mind, and to lock you up."

Jules sank upon a chair.

"Don't worry. I'll be here."

He leaned forward to light his pipe over the lamp chimney. Kuebler, after concealing the money, left the room.

Jules felt peculiarly detached from all his troubles. His pipe drew well, and he did not need to relight it again. He glanced at the dial of his big silver watch many times. But he was neither impatient nor fearful.

Against the window-panes, the sleety downpour slashed continuously.

FOR many minutes now no one had spoken.

Alfred Darlay was slumped in his seat, wrapped in his greatcoat, for the stove had been allowed to cool. The Germans on guard were talking among themselves, and the harsh sounds of the foreign tongue echoed in the arched emptiness overhead.

The eyes of the prisoners glowed with a sort of fever. One man rubbed his hands together steadily. Another clutched one wrist in the fingers of the other hand, and rocked gently backward and forward. Gregaud breathed like a wounded animal, with occasional outbursts, in which mingled oaths, foul words, and the names of his wife and children. The fine edge of their courage was being blunted by the delay. Many of them made a visible effort to keep what they termed a decent countenance. The impulse to beat at the oaken panels of the doors or to launch an attack on the guards was contemplated in secret. Each plotter knew his plan was mad, but the strain of waiting was not so difficult to bear, if one kept one's mind busy.

Doctor Vieges presented an austere figure in the folds of his coat, with his fine head outlined by the light of the lanterns, like a chiseled bronze in the frame of white beard. He had risen but once, when he had seen a German private bandaging his foot, which was blistered and red from a long march. He told him how to burst the blisters with a needle and thread, how to rub in the tallow, and the best way to dispose the cloth inside the boot to assure comparative ease. He had done this in an abstracted manner, following habit.

At times, in spite of the worry, one of the Raiders fell asleep head resting on his hands. And the others took care not to awaken him, envious as they were of his momentary freedom of thought about the future. The sleeper would soon slip forward, open his eyes and straighten up, staring about him in wonder, then as he recalled the situation, his face became fixed again in dumb resignation.

No sounds came from the outside. All noises were stifled by the storm. The sentry dropped the butt of his Dreyse upon the flag stones near the door at times, and all would start up, half fearing that the hour of execution had arrived.

The little door leading into the church from the sacristy opened softly. The sergeant who commanded the guards appeared. The non-com. came straight to Darlay.

"The major commanding wishes to question you," he announced.

Darlay did not stand.

"Tell him that I know nothing," he said, "and that I wish to be left at peace until morning."

"You must follow me," the sergeant insisted gently.

"Go on, Darlay," Vieges approved. "And if you see any way of saving yourself, take it. It's bad enough to go through with what is coming at my age, let alone at yours."

"There's little hope of that," Darlay said dully.

"A little hope, is better than no hope at all," Vieges persisted. He held out his hand and gripped Alfred's tightly, "Good luck, my boy."

"I'll be back," Alfred assured him.

He placed his *kêpi* on his head. The Raiders looked up into his face as he passed, and managed to smile. He followed the non-com. into the sacristy, and the door separating this chamber from the church closed.

The German offered him a civilian overcoat and a fur cap. Darlay looked at him in amazement.

"Why change?" he asked.

"Orders," the sergeant replied. Then, looking closely at Darlay's coat, "I guess it was noticed that your buttons were off."

"And your chief is afraid that I'll contract a cold?" Darlay asked sarcastically.

Nevertheless, he stripped off his military coat and his *kêpi*, and donned the new garments. He gained by the exchange—the coat was warmer than his own, and the fur cap covered his ears. He would at least be comfortable on his promenade.

Kuebler, again leading the way, opened a side door. Together, they stepped into the cemetery. Instead of gaining the street entrance, however, the non-com. made for the rear of the inclosure, opened an iron gate with a huge key, and Alfred found himself in a deeply sunk lane that skirted the burial plot in that quarter.

A challenge rang out. The sergeant answered. Darlay noted the syllables. The two passed within two yards of the sentry who had called out, but could scarcely distinguish him.

"The French are very close," the non-com. remarked. "Our last patrol reported them at the crossroads."

"I don't know anything about it."

"It's the ——'s own night for a walk."

As they progressed against the storm, the sergeant spoke several times, as if attempting to draw his companion into conversation. The lieutenant of *Mobiles* was puzzled. What could Wegstetten hope to learn from him? Certainly, with their numerous spies and excellent cavalry, the Germans knew all they needed to know.

Perhaps the major would offer him his life, on parole, upon his promise not to bear arms against Germany again. What should he do if this were the case? Had not the doctor advised him to take any road of escape? After all, his life might be useful to his country even after the war ended. It was impossible to believe that no war would follow this one. If France was defeated, she would seek revenge.

He halted himself abruptly in this reasoning. No, after his grandiloquent gesture that day, tearing up his commission, he would not accept mercy. That afternoon he had witnessed the simple-minded peasants and laborers composing the band, resist the temptation to win life at the cost of honor. Could he do less than they? Did he need the presence of others to steer a straight course?

"Wait here," the sergeant ordered.

He opened a door which led into the rear of the inn, and entered, closing the door after him.

Darlay stood for a moment, arms dangling, bewildered, unable to think or act. Would he suddenly find himself staring around the church as he had seen the others who had awakened from just such dreams of liberty? His mind refused to understand. Then a thought crackled through his consciousness. Free! The French forces were near, and the opportunity to warn them that French lives depended on their action—

He turned and hurled himself into the storm.

Fields stretched between the village and the nearest woods. He was perhaps fifty yards away from the inn door when he heard the first challenge.

"*Wer da?*"

HE HALTED and called out the meaningless syllables he had heard the sergeant speak a few moments before. Then as nothing more was said, he passed on. Any moment, he expected the stentorian "*heraus*" as the guard called to his comrades in alarm. When he had escaped from Camp Misery, where the French army had been penned up by the Germans at Sedan, he had broken through the lines. He had been challenged, fired upon, but had succeeded in making his way out. There was no reason, he thought, that he should not repeat. Fortune smiles upon the bold, the proverb said.

The falling snow inclosed him like a wadding of wool.

He stumbled against a wall. He climbed over this first barrier, and found himself among shrubs. He crashed through these. Under a group of trees he paused to take breath and get his bearings. The inn was to the left of the road as one came from the east. Darlay decided to gain the road, cross it and progress through the woods on the south side of the highway.

This was easier planned than carried out. He fell often, and when he rose was not always sure he was facing the west, as he should if he hoped to reach the French outposts.

He combatted the panic that was fast rising within him, and compelled himself to halt long enough to regain some measure of calm. He would not take another step until he could clearly map out his course of action. As if to reward him for this determination, the snow flurry ended. The stars were visible.

This sudden change however had its drawbacks. If he could see, he could also be seen. A few lights marked Echezbeau behind him. Also a sharp wind rose, blew the new-fallen snow into a mist. The cold increased. His nostrils were pinched together, and he had to beat his hands against his chest.

Bending low, fearing that he might be within the range of vision of a German sentry, he slid through the bushes, down the embankment, across the road. The frost on the tree branches glistened like diamonds. He entered the woods not very far from the spot where he had met the peddler on the day of his arrival.

As he walked he became more and more puzzled. Had Kuebler deliberately wished him to escape, he could not have worked to that end more efficiently. He had given the password, knowing very well that Darlay was neither deaf nor an idiot. And then vanished, with a mere admonition to wait for his return. That was strange, to put it mildly.

The wolves' chorus tore him from his speculation. He realized that he did not possess even a pen knife to defend himself. Among the trees they could slink too near for his peace of mind. So he was forced upon the road. When he turned he saw several dark shapes following him, stenciled clearly against the snow of the embankment. He waved a branch at them and they fled, to reappear again. As he hurried westward, he was escorted by these four-footed companions. It seemed to him that they were acting more from curiosity than a desire to kill.

When he walked, they walked. When he ran, they managed to keep abreast of him. One, gaining an advance took position in the path squatted on his haunches, as if firmly resolved to stand his ground. But when the man was within fifteen yards, the animal lost his courage and leaped away.

The sergeant had said the French has been seen at the crossroads, that is, near Combeaufontaine—seven kilometers from Echezbeau, or two hours' march for a man on foot. Unless he was mistaken, it was now about nine o'clock. At eleven, he would be with the *Mobiles*. By one or two, if he could convince them of the necessity for immediate action, the battalions would be before Echezbeau.

What then? Would not the Germans first dispose of the *Francs-Tireurs?* There was but one hope for full success. That the onslaught would be sufficiently vigorous to spill the first defenders aside, and allow a strong contingent to run through the village and against the church. Darlay hoped to be able to command the company detailed for this bold rush. He would be glad to face death with weapons in his hands.

Much depended on the quality of the leaders in charge of the *Mobiles*. Had they been regular army officers, Darlay would have felt no fear of a refusal. Whatever the quality of the generals commanding the French, the subalterns of the regular forces were usually daring, determined young men. But with the officers recently emerged from civilian life, conscious of their responsibility and importance, it might be a different matter. They were brave enough, he had learned. They had, however, an exaggerated opinion of the fighting ability of the German infantry. Darlay, who had seen the early part of the war, knew that the French infantry had been superior to the German. The invaders' victories had been due to superior numbers, overwhelmingly superior artillery, and a sound organization. On the few occasions when the foot soldiers had met on even terms, the French had won out. At close quarters, such as the combat in the village would necessarily incur, there was nothing to fear for the *Mobiles*. One man was worth another.

"Qui Vive?"

A challenge in French! Darlay felt a surge of joy that warmed his chilled body.

"France!" he called back.

"What regiment?"

"*Mobiles*—officer."

Several men came out of the bushes. Darlay recognized the familiar *kêpis*, the gaiters, and the stripes on the sleeves of the first to appear. These soldiers belonged to the Langres *Mobiles*.

"What are you doing out here?" the sergeant asked suspiciously.

"I escaped from Echezbeau. Where is your captain?"

"In bed probably."

"I must see him on an important matter."

"Nothing doing," the non-com. replied. "We're on duty here, and can't leave. And I'll be —— if I let the first man that comes along with a fairy tale pass through the lines."

"There are ten lives depending on me," Darlay protested.

"And a couple of thousand depending on me," replied the sergeant, with unshakable logic. "Here you stay."

Darlay explained his mission, argued, but was met by total disbelief.

"Where are your papers?" he was asked.

Darlay told of tearing up his commission.

"Worse and worse," said the sergeant. "You'll have to think of a better yarn."

"Here's what's left of my uniform," Darlay said opening his coat.

"That's no proof. I don't know what your game is, but whatever it is, it won't work."

"When will you be relieved?"

"At midnight. Then, you come to the village with us."

"You'll be severely punished for what you're doing, Sergeant."

"No, I won't. I have my orders."

And Darlay was compelled to wait. Although he had arrived a full hour before he had expected, it meant a delay of one hour more. A peculiar arithmetic familiar to men who have dealt with a non-com. acting upon orders.

AT THIRTY minutes past twelve, the relief appeared, commanded by a youthful second lieutenant, who listened impatiently to Darlay's story. Darlay mentioned several names of *Mobiles* commanders he knew, but this made little impression. It was within possibility that a German agent would hold just such information.

"I know that part of your information concerning the *Francs-Tireurs* is correct," the second lieutenant declared. "But you should keep within the truth. The Raiders were massacred by the Prussians in the village street. We heard that from the peasants."

"It looked that way for a few minutes, but we were saved by an officer. Do you think I marked my face as a disguise?"

The other shrugged wearily.

"Go back with the sergeant and talk with the captain," he said. He added for the benefit of the non-com. "If this man shows any desire to run away, plug him."

"Yes, *mon Lieutenant.*"

The soldiers surrounded him, and the sergeant swung ahead. The little troop marched into La Neuvelle, as the clock struck one. Darlay was first taken before the lieutenant on duty, to whom he related the circumstances that had led him to be out on the Vesoul road so late at night in such a season. By unhappy chance, these *Mobiles* had but recently arrived in Langres, and Darlay did not know any of the officers.

The lieutenant was a small, thin man, extremely nervous.

"And I suppose, if we followed your plan, we'd be met by overwhelming forces and cut to pieces," he said. "You'll be locked up until morning when you'll be questioned at length."

Darlay lost patience. Heedless of possible injury, forgetting that he might be bayoneted, he leaped at the officer and grasped him by the collar.

"You'll take me to the captain immediately," he shouted.

He was roughtly thrown to the floor, but that did not stop his clamor. And the privates who held him were dragged about in a wild scramble. Punches landed on his face. He gained his feet in spite of all efforts to hold him, and thrust his face against that of the little officer, who fell back a few steps.

The sergeant had caught the lamp from the table top, and was holding it safe, in a corner of the room.

"I hold you personally responsible for the death of my comrades!" Darlay cried. "Although you have of the soldier nothing save the uniform, you are subject to military laws."

Even to Darlay it was not very clear what charges could be brought against the lieutenant. But the bluff worked. The officer was a newly promoted man, at that stage when the mere mention of a court-martial filled him with terror.

"It will go hard with you if you don't prove your story," he said. "I'll take a chance." He dispatched a man to awaken the captain, and offered Darlay water to wash his bloody face.

Darlay waved help aside. He was in no mood to care about his personal appearance.

The captain appeared twenty minutes later. When Darlay saw him, he almost allowed a groan to escape. He looked like a retired grocer in a masquerade costume. The three stripes on his sleeve and *kêpi* were broad and conspicuous, as was the sword, long and rapier-like, which dragged noisily on the floor.

"Grosmenil is my name, captain of *Mobiles*," he announced with importance.

Darlay saluted. And again, he told his story. With the many repetitions, the details of his escape became almost unbelievable, even to himself, and he could scarcely blame Grosmenil for lifting his brows.

When he had concluded, the captain suddenly struck a pose.

"It shall not be said that Frenchmen died without my lifting a hand to help them," he said. "You may count on me."

Darlay impulsively grasped his hand—

"That's the first cheering word I've heard tonight."

"However," Grosmenil added, "I cannot act on my own responsibility. There is a major at Combeaufontaine, with the bulk of our forces. I will send word to him immediately."

That meant at least two hours lost. Darlay pointed this out. Grosmenil shrugged.

"What else can I do?"

"Who is the major in charge at Combeaufontaine?"

"Baumont."

"I know him!"

Baumont was a fine type of soldier. He had served in the regular army in Crimea. He was the one man Darlay would have picked out for the expedition against Echezbeau."

"Write him!" suggested Grosmenil.

"——!" remarked Darlay. "I'll go. Have you a horse to lend me?"

"You can't go alone," protested the lieutenant.

"Then come with me."

But the prospect of the ride in the cold night held nothing alluring for the little man. Grosmenil again evoked his sacred duty and responsibility, and it was decided that the sergeant should go with Darlay as guard.

The horses were saddled and brought out. Darlay and the sergeant mounted. The latter held his rifle across the saddle, and was not yet won over to the belief that Darlay was not a spy.

They set out.

Darlay soon discovered that the horse he rode was much superior to the mount of the non-com. Yet he must keep pace with the slower animal.

His impatience grew. At length, unable to endure the situation any longer, he opened the conversation with casual remarks. The sergeant, pleased to show his knowledge of current events, was put off his guard.

Darlay suddenly grasped the rifle by the barrel, and tore it from the numbed fingers, throwing it far into the snow. The non-com. uttered a hearty curse and grappled with the lieutenant. But Darlay, his strength increased by his desperate need of haste, broke his hold and threw him from the saddle to the ground. He dug the spurs into the flanks of his mount and was away.

A detonation far behind informed him that the sergeant had found his rifle and was firing blindly in his direction. Had Grosmenil sent a messenger on foot to Combeaufontaine, it would have taken him the better part of an hour to cover the distance. Within a few minutes after leaving La Neuvelle he flashed by the outpost before the village, and asked the first soldier he encountered to direct him to Major Baumont's quarters.

BAUMONT wore the baggy red trousers and the braided coat he had worn eighteen years before in the far-off campaign against Russia. His clean-shaven chin was square, red and hard. Here was a man who had nothing in common with Grosmenil, doughty captain of *Mobiles*.

He laid a heavy hand on Darlay's shoulder.

"What's up?"

"I'm Lieutenant Darlay. We have met in Langres—"

"I recognize you now."

"I escaped from Echezbeau. There are ten *Francs-Tireurs* to be executed at dawn. I thought you'd like to know—"

"Bugler!" Baumont cried out. Privates and non-coms. took up the cry, and two buglers ran up to the group, coats unbuttoned, lacking belts and arms, but bearing their instruments. "Blow like the —— and get that bunch of plate-lickers out of bed. Captain Moreau, your company starts first." He turned to Darlay, "Come in with me while I get my equipment—how did it happen?"

Again Darlay went through his recital but this time he was not interrupted. The major changed his footgear of soft leather for riding boots, while his orderly folded the maps into the case.

"Your horse is ready, Major,"the orderly said.

Baumont had twelve hundred men under his orders in the village of Combeaufontaine, and two hundred and fifty more in La Neuvelle, the men under Grosmenil. In the few minutes it had taken him to dress, the companies had formed, and were starting out.

Contrasted with the well-dressed, splendidly equipped German privates Darlay had seen in Echezbeau, they presented a pitiful appearance. Uniforms in rags, many of the men with their feet wrapped in sacking, bent under the weight of the knapsacks, it scarcely appeared possible that they could be matched against the Baden infantry. But Baumont's spirit had been infused into them, and they joked and laughed as they walked, with something of the gaiety that had been the rule among French troops before the crushing defeats of August and September.

"I don't bother them with too much drilling," Baumont explained. "I taught them all there was to know about a Chassepot, taught them the bugle calls. It was hopeless to try to turn them into finished fighting men in a few weeks as some idiots tried to do."

Baumont leaned toward a man in the ranks.

"Well, Paul, still on your feet?"

"Yes, Major. I still have a few toes left," the private replied with a grin.

He picked out several other men and inquired as to their health. An old trick, Darlay knew, but one which never failed. A man who was distinguished from the mass was a man who would break his heart to justify the choice.

As he rode boot to boot with Baumont, Darlay told what had happened within the past week.

The major's eyes glowed.

"That man, Vieges, he has the texture of a great leader," he declared. "Too bad a man like him wasted his time pawing bones in a provincial town." He lifted his fist in a violent gesture. "He's lucky, though, to be out of the Army. When you have as spectacle the promotion of a man like Bazaine, a rag doll, a clown, to the rank of Marshal, it is enough to disgust any man with the service. There was a man with one hundred and eighty thousand of the finest soldiers, who allowed himself to be trapped in Metz. His subordinates, Canrobert and the others, win battles, and he hasn't the guts to send the reserves in to finish the job. He surrenders, gives up his flags! Scared swine that he is! Is it any wonder from now on, when a bluffer is wanted in any comedy the world over, a Frenchman is chosen?"

"The question is—what of the future? Is there any hope?"

"There's always hope, first the hope to win, then the hope to make it a draw. Then there's still left the hope to croak, but to leave the other fellow with a definite impression!" He turned in the saddle and gave orders to quicken the march.

Before a mile and a half had been covered, he dismounted, and the knapsacks of the nearest men, those who were the weakest, were tied to his saddle. Darlay followed suit, and the two walked at the head of the column.

At La Neuvelle nothing was ready. The captain had gone back to bed, feeling no doubt that the man who had escaped from the sergeant was a spy. Baumont snapped orders at the nervous lieutenant, but forbade the bugles to be blown, fearing that in the stillness of the night the sound would travel to the German sentries. Followed by Darlay, he entered Grosmenil's room and urged the sleepy man to get up and dress, urged him in sarcastic tones.

Grosmenil turned pale, his lips trembled.

"What was I to do?" he asked. "Start out with two hundred men against a battalion of regulars?"

"You should have dispatched a rider to me immediately, and hastened forward to make a diversion. You might have known that I would have been at hand to support you."

"I did not think that ten men—"

"It's not a question of ten men or a thousand. Frenchmen should not be shot under our noses."

Grosmenil drew himself erect:

"Major, I hope to prove under fire that cowardice was not my motive."

Baumont changed his tone immediately: "I feel sure of that, Captain. After all, you're not expected to know how to handle a situation such as this. A trained man might have been puzzled. What's done is done. Take the lead of your company."

As they hastened to reach the head of the column, Baumont turned to Darlay.

"The poor fellow means well enough. He's a stuffed shirt, that's all. I have sent word to the general commanding of what I am about to do. If we can manage to clean them up for a few minutes, we can hold out in the village until reinforcements come. I presume that will be around eight or nine in the morning."

"I doubt if the Germans will hold out and counter attack," Darlay assured him. "I'm sure they have decided to evacuate Echezbeau in the morning."

Baumont summoned a captain and ordered him to recommend silence. But the sound of fourteen hundred pairs of boots was difficult to hush.

"About five hundred meters from the village, I will halt the main body," Baumont said. "How far are their outposts from their village?"

"I don't know whether they've changed now, but they used to have no outposts at all. Feared to have them cut up by the Raiders. And there's the cold to be considered. The first group on watch is likely to be stationed in the first house."

"The fact is that it's cold enough to freeze brandy," Baumont said. "As cold as it was before Sebastopol, or my blood is cooler than it was then. For the last four months I have often wished that I had fallen then. It's bitter to take a licking."

"THE dregs of defeat—"

"Before morning I'll see if a few more drops of wine can be found at the bottom of the glass. And, if not, the time will come when we'll uncork another bottle, Doctor Vieges—" Darlay had told him of the doctor's defiance at the court martial. "That man was not born to be hanged!"

Miles were covered. Then Baumont, upon advice from Darlay, held up his hand, and the companies came to a halt.

"Moreau's men are about the best. You will take them forward, Lieutenant Darlay. As soon as the firing breaks out, I'll push forward." The major glanced at his watch. "Five to five. Took us longer than I expected. But dawn is still far off at this season. We're in time."

He called Moreau and explained to him that Darlay was in no sense to supersede him in command, but was merely to act as his guide.

"Lieutenant Darlay knows the vicinity," Baumont pointed out, "and has seen these troops. So that after the first shot is fired, you had better take his advice, as you would mine. Your objective is the church, regardless of anything else. If I don't get up in time to prevent the enemy closing about your company, hold out in the building and in the cemetery." He shook hands with both Darlay and Moreau. "Good luck."

They had not progressed twenty-five yards when Darlay turned to Moreau.

"I have the word for tonight, Captain. Perhaps I can get near enough the first sentry to quiet him. That will get us in the village before the others come out."

"Right."

Moreau motioned to his men to get into the ditch, out of sight.

"If you succeed, whistle. If not, we'll come on at the first sound."

"Right," Darlay said in his turn.

He walked ahead, and soon discerned the bulky outlines of the first houses. A sentry, rifle held by folding the arms across the chest, to save the fingers from the cold of the steel, was pacing slowly across the street. An attack was evidently not expected for the man scarcely glanced at the road. He was doing his turn as nonchalantly as if he were before the gate of his own barracks in his native land.

Darlay decided to rehearse the word and its pronunciation. To his chagrin he discovered that although he had recalled the syllables clearly when speaking with Moreau the pass word now evaded him.

"This is stupid," he thought. "I'll remember in a few seconds."

He disliked to go back and confront Moreau with the admission. He struggled in vain with his stubborn memory. Any moment now the sentry might notice him, skulking in the shadow of the bushes. The result would be a loud challenge, then a shot. He had best pocket his pride, confess to the captain, and carry on the attack as originally planned.

He turned to go back.

Behind him, from the village, came a crashing volley. The first fusillade was followed by another. And Darlay found himself among Moreau's company, who had rushed forward thinking that the lieutenant had been seen, and the alarm given.

"Come on, lads," bellowed Moreau. "Bayonet!"

The sentry had turned, shouldered and

fired his piece. A Frenchman dropped. And another mysterious volley shattered the air. The sentry was calling out. Instead of running for cover he crouched, alone before the onrushing *Mobiles*. A bayonet flashed forward, and the brave guard fell over into the snow. Other Germans had run out of the nearest house, and a revolver crackled.

This first barrier offered by the men on guard, led by the determined non-com., halted the *Mobiles* for several seconds, although over one hundred men were pitted against the twelve. The Baden infantry were pouring out of the houses, and instead of rushing blindly to the end of the street into the fighting, were forming in line before the inn. Against these new enemies, Moreau led his men. The ranks of the Germans parted before the bristling bayonets.

From a window of the inn came Wegstetten's voice, while the openings of the near-by houses spat flames. Glass panes, struck by bullets shattered with clear tinkling crashes.

"The church, lads!" called Moreau.

Somehow the *Mobiles* passed through that second line of bayonets, and were climbing the steps leading to the door of the holy building. Here the sentry was nailed to the portals by the bayonets. The doors were not locked. The guards who had camped on the altar steps were overwhelmed.

Darlay looked at the vacant benches.

He paused, bewildered, and called out:

"Doctor Vieges! Doctor Vieges!"

His voice echoed in the air still vibrating with the detonations. He leaped through the door of the sacristy. No one there, From the streets came the rattle of shots, the cries of the combatants. Baumont was pressing home the attack. Finding themselves left at peace, the *Mobiles* under Moreau were leaving the building to attack the Germans in the rear.

Darlay did not follow them. He picked up a lantern and went into the cemetery. A dread suspicion of the truth led him among the graves to the main gate.

And there he understood the meaning of the volleys he had heard.

ALFRED stared at what remained of Vieges, oblivious of the conflict raging not a hundred yards from him, oblivious of the whining bullets that ricochetted from the walls and tombstones.

Yes, here were the ten of them and he was left. Mechanically he counted the corpses. He counted eleven. He counted again. There were still eleven dead men against the wall.

"Illusion," he told himself.

He had made up his mind to be with them to the end and now was tallying himself to make up the number.

He counted again.

Perhaps another man had been added at the last minute for some offense against military regulations. He brought the lantern close to the faces, forcing himself to be steady. Yes, he knew them all. Gregaud had fallen upon his back, his arms close to his body, his face unmarked and calm. He knew them all, save this one—who had fallen forward, at the extreme right of the line. Who was he?

"Eh—" he said aloud. "My *kêpi!*"

Closer. He recognized his coat. There could be no mistake for the buttons were missing from the flap spread to one side over the snow. He laid the lantern on the nearest body to keep it away from the snow, and grasped the unknown by the shoulders, turned him upon his back. He knew that face. Again, he struggled painfully against his balky memory. The face was his own, a little heavier perhaps. But the eyes, the forehead—were those of his brother—of Jules!

"Jules—they shot—him—"

Of course, they had. When his escape had been discovered, they had sought for another victim. Wegstetten knew that Jules was his brother. And they had replaced the missing man with Jules.

He looked a last time at Jules, then grasping his rifle, ran swiftly toward the inn. The Germans had at last gathered in a compact mass, and were retreating slowly into the field back of the village, defending themselves furiously. There was fighting going on in the houses. Bodies were hurled from windows into the snow. The continuous firing lighted the scene.

Wegstetten dominated the dark mass of the Baden Infantry. Darlay brought the rifle to his shoulder, aimed at the face beneath the helmet. The stock of the Chassepot slapped his shoulder sharply.

Wegstetten had disappeared.

The German troops had received orders to evacuate Echezbeau, and by retreating before the *Mobiles* under Baumont had merely hurried their departure an hour. It is doubtful that if the Baden Battalion had determined to hold the village the French could have dislodged them. Toward the close the splendid discipline of the men, the undeniable skill of the officers was beginning to show. There was a decided floating in the attack of the irregulars.

But as the Germans had abandoned their dead and several wounded, the French claimed a victory, which, unimportant though it was in the tide of defeat that engulfed France, loomed big in the eyes of the soldiers. Darlay went with Moreau and what was left of his men, in pursuit. But the soldiers had walked the previous day, and had made the hurried march by night, followed by the sharp engagement. Darlay succumbed to fatigue as did the others.

He dragged himself back and followed Moreau into a house, where he rolled in a corner and slept like an animal. His muscles had ached, his brain refused to work. It was as if nature, which measures suffering carefully, had granted him unconsciousness before the breaking point.

When he awoke troops were filing through the street. He staggered to a window. For the moment his personal tragedy was wiped from memory.

Many of the men were clad in thin cotton clothing. Faces pinched with cold, hands raw. Through the wrapping around the dilapidated boots blood often oozed into the snow. There was a tenseness about them, a sort of controlled exultation, the direct result of the slight success of the night. They had heard that Baumont's forces had pushed the Germans out. They scarcely dared allow themselves to hope, but still, hope struggled and showed itself.

A few pieces of artillery rolled by, dragged by skinny horses.

Half starved, half naked men, with cannon that would not carry half the distance the enemy could cover, swinging with desperate eagerness toward the battle line! It was like the last feeble sword-stroke of the defeated gladiator, in whom the fighting instinct is so strong that the muscles themselves act in a gesture of attack.

There were men of all ages marching by. Darlay did not know which to pity most—the old-timers who had seen victory in other days or the beardless youths who were learning the taste of disaster. He felt detached, as if it were not true that he would soon be going on, to face the formidable Prussian machine.

When the procession became too mournful, the bugles sounded, the same gay notes that had pierced through the tumult of Froeschwiller and Sedan.

"Come on, boys, another effort!"

And they went on.

Darlay went out to find Baumont and receive orders.

Baumont was in the church. There the dead were being brought in and laid in rows, the French on one side, the Germans on the other. It was best, the major explained, to do things decently when one had the time. The bodies could be searched, their identity established beyond doubt. Thus there could be no such word as "missing" which is worse than tidings of death.

The Raiders had been brought in. As they had been found together, they were together here also. Darlay looked at Jules and found it strange that the shock he had experienced was not renewed.

He spoke to Baumont:

"That's my brother," he said. "I found him against the wall out there with my coat and *képi*. When the Germans found I had escaped, they must have brought him to take my place."

Baumont removed the *képi* and looked at the dead man's face, trying to find the right thing to say.

"He looks like you—"

"I know—"

A WOMAN had approached them. Her eyes were wide and staring, and she did not look down.

She started violently when she saw Darlay.

"You are Alfred," she said.

"And you—"

"Jules's wife." Her voice was emotionless, flat. "He talked so strange before he left home. I know now he intended to give himself up for you—"

"He gave himself up, you say?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"For you."

Darlay was silent. What could he say? It would have been his place to die. He was not married, had no children. What was done was done.

"Where are the boys?" he asked.

"Home." She passed her hand over her forehead. "Where we're stopping, I mean. Our home was burned."

Darlay turned to Baumont.

"My brother was not arrested. He gave himself up. I don't understand—"

"I will detail four men to carry Jules Darlay's body to his home. And you, Darlay, we will not be leaving for some minutes—"

"I understand," Darlay returned, and turned inarticulately toward his sister-in-law.

They stepped aside to allow two men carrying a corpse to pass by. Darlay uttered a sharp exclamation:

"That's the sergeant—who freed me!"

The body of the non-com. had been found in the field back of the village.

"Don't keep madame here any longer," Baumont said quickly, for the woman had turned ashen pale.

After the two had left the church, Baumont cut the straps of the sergeant's knapsack. He threw out the neatly arranged equipment.

Then he found the package.

He had examined it, and called Moreau to his side.

"You have seen those posters on the walls," he said.

"The offer of a reward for the capture of the *Francs-Tireurs?*"

"Yes. The Raiders were captured, weren't they?"

"So it seems, Major," Moreau replied with a smile.

He had not known personally any of the band. He had just come safely through a hot engagement, and he was satisfied and ready to see a joke in anything.

Baumont pointed at Kuebler's body.

"Pick him up and place him in the sacristy. With the big fellow, there."

The big fellow had once been Wegstetten, whose shoulder straps earned him privacy even after death.

"Captain, you stay with me. The rest of you get out and close the door."

When the two were alone, Baumont opened the package.

"Gold—" he said. "It's as I thought."

He turned to Moreau.

"From the first I believed that the German sergeant was bribed to let Lieutenant Darlay make his escape. He would not have taken the chance without money. Now the brother took his place. And the brother had just been ruined, farm burned. Where did he get this money? And why did he give up his life, he who had a wife and children. You know the dose of fatalism in these peasants. Under normal conditions, he would have reasoned that his brother was a soldier and ending his life as he had been meant to."

Moreau nodded.

"I see. Well, what do you want me to do? For I don't suppose you brought me in here without a good reason."

"How did that young man Darlay impress you?"

"Clean-cut, with an undercurrent of sensitiveness."

"Strange how different men of the same blood can differ. And more peculiar how identical qualities will show through the difference. Jules was not a patriot. He was a *familiot.* Everything for his family. Sold himself for his wife and children until he found out that another member would suffer. Then, this man who had had for a moment the soul of Judas, found in himself the courage and self-sacrifice of an apostle. The man who faces death for another by deliberate choice is, to the full, a man. Jules was a throwback to the age when the sole devotion was concentrated on the family group. That's all. A —— traitor, but a good brother! The other lad, Lieutenant Darlay, is normal, attached to the greater group, France. He could not understand that first deed no more than I could have understood at his age. No one must know."

"My word of honor—"

"Thank you, Moreau. Darlay has informed me that the haul made from the supply train raided by the *Francs-Tireurs* is concealed in the woods. I'll obtain precisions as to the locality when I see him. You, Moreau, will join this package to it."

"Understood, Major."

Baumont then stepped near the long corpse of the German major.

"We might as well search this gentleman."

THE major seized the map case eagerly. Maps of France were precious at that time. The French armies had entered the field with many maps of Prussia, but no maps of their own country. Defeat had never been considered possible. Which shows that self-confidence alone can not win battles.

Baumont spread the various papers discovered in the inside pockets over a table. The light was poor, and he sought for a lantern. Not finding one, he took several wax tapers out of a small closet near by and lighted them. He fumbled with the papers, grumbling as he did so.

Moreau, who could not read German, busied himself collecting Wegstetten's small belongings—a heavy silver watch, a penknife, French and German money, the belt buckle, the small crosses, and the sword.

"I'll have these put in a safe place until things are over, and then sent to his relatives. His address must be among his papers."

Baumont, who had been knitting his brows over a letter, looked up and Moreau was surprised to see the emotion in his face.

"You know what Darlay told us about the peddler whom the Raiders shot in the woods? He was this officer's son. Twenty years old. He says he is too young too die. But he will not give his name to the Raiders, for fear they might hold him as hostage and ask of his father favors hard to refuse, and not within the major's right to grant. The lad didn't seem very excited. He merely says that the French about him are quite different from the French he had known before the war, when he and his father lived in northern France. His mother had been French. He says he's glad she died long ago."

The building suddenly vibrated. Neither of the two could hear the cannon, but the detonations could be felt. An engagement was beginning, miles away. Probably Von Werder's rear guard covering the swinging movement to protect the forces besieging Belfort. Baumont slipped the papers into his pockets.

"We'll have to go on now."

They left the sacristy.

Five minutes later, the *Mobiles* were moving eastward.

Grosmenil, who looked like a retired grocer, had died like a soldier. Baumont placed Alfred Darlay in command of his company

Near the church he saw a group of men—what was left of the Raiders.

"Do you think the Prussians will come back?" they asked.

"Who knows? This is our last hope—"

"If they come back, we'll take to the woods again!"

"Then—good luck!"

The bugles and drums beat a fast rhythm.

For several weeks hope increased.

Von Werder, squeezed against Belfort, with forty-five thousand men was faced by nearly one hundred thousand Frenchmen, the greater part untrained, but able to use a rifle. The forces from Langres had joined the French army of the East, commanded by General Bourbaki. At Villersexel, a small town on the Ognon River, the French won a hard battle, after fourteen hours of bitter fighting.

There Bourbaki forgot that he wore stars, remembered only that he had once been a subaltern of Zouaves, then of the Foreign Legion. At the critical moment he placed himself at the head of the infantry, lifted his sword.

"Come, children—forward!" he called. "Have the French forgotten how to charge?"

They had not. Von Werder retreated. Success was in sight.

Bourbaki pressed his advantage. But the army was starving, half naked. In Vesoul were long trains of supplies cluttering the railroad tracks, needing an order to send them forward. The order was not given. The trains were left unguarded and looted by the scum of the population. In the heart of winter, with empty stomachs, the soldiers of Bourbaki rushed headlong against the German positions along the Lisaine River.

Garibaldi, who was in Dijon, did not stir to help. Manteuffel's corps, sixty thousand men with artillery, came to reinforce Von Werder.

The French were forced to take refuge in Switzerland.

Baumont had managed to keep his unit in order. Moreau had fallen at Lisaine, where Darlay had received a Prussian bullet in the right thigh.

At the frontier, Baumont and Darlay handed their swords to a Swiss officer, while their men stacked their rifles on the breast-high heaps of firearms left by the troops which had preceded them into neutral territory.

"We're licked," Baumont said. "But show them you can take it gracefully. Keep in ranks. Columns by four, march!"

The WERE-COUGAR*

by Raymond S. Spears

Author of "The Pseudo Ranger," "A Fifteen-Cent Meal," etc.

THE red-men noticed a long time ago that the cougars, huge cats, in the Silent Mountains were different from others beyond the wide, dry valleys surrounding the clustered range. When the scientists came they made the wise observation that the cougars were inbred, and some had six claws, some five claws; some had four claws with dews, and cranial teeth and skeleton details often varied greatly from the accepted standard.

This was not without its like in natural history. Indeed, in this same range the bears disclosed a new variety entirely different in some respects from other bears, as if the animals had been so long isolated that they, too, had developed characteristics especially adapted to the living conditions or the moral atmosphere of the timber, stone, life and spirit of the strange, haunting land of tree-grown, jagged rocks.

Mesquite, spotted oak, whiteleaf, chinquapins, mountain mahogany, wild plum, laurel, cherries, cat's-claw, screwbeans, palo verdes, yopon, boxelder, yellow buckeye and a dozen other tall shrubs and sometimes shadowless trees grew in a desolation with many cacti and thistles, bitter brouse and strange plants. The waters of the springs were mostly bitter, and colored in repulsive hues. Snakes added a crawling menace. Sometimes following occasional spring showers the whole range was covered with lovely blossoms and at other times the grim sky was cloudless for long periods and the arid winds lifted dust of crumbled vegetation as the gale rasped hot amid the crisp branches with dry locust songs.

The Indians feared and despised the range, though visiting it sometimes out of curiosity. Before the 'Paches were driven away renegade whites came to lurk among the cañons and to lie hidden beyond the reach of posses or rangers. They grew lonely in the desolation, however, returning across the vast alkali flats to bulldoze or propitiate more reputable people.

Finally came an era of attempted settlement by cattlemen who sought to grow beef to feed on the varied grasses and leaves, twigs and whatever might be eaten. The Dogtooth, Curly Horn and Baby Hand brands lost out in the attempts to claim the range. The atmosphere of the Silent Mountains deadened the hopes and nullified the enterprize of the men.

The dobe ranch buildings were washed and crumbled down. The few cattle which escaped the last round-ups became savage, long-horned, deer-like creatures as wild as the native animals. The colorful snakes gathered in the weed-patches where the human homes had been, their voices whispering, sometimes uttering low bird-like notes and again their rattled tails giving angry warning by whirring.

---

* *This is an Off-The-Trail story. See foot-note, first contents page*

The cougars stalked up and down, few and distorted, a hunchback among them, it was said, more furtive than wolves. Sometimes they would break the silence in a wailing *yeowl* which echoed in the valleys. They were unchallenged in their domain. Even the bears did not dispute with these cougars, having indeed little need of it, for bees, ants and plants stored up honey, eggs and roots sufficient to keep bruin well fed.

To the Silents came an odd human whose eyes were slanting, whose nose was flat, whose skin was dull grayish-brown. Yet he somehow gave the impression of being white. In the distance he would have been mistaken for a cowboy who had wandered down the line from Wyoming or Montana. His voice was high, shrill and disquieting. His hands were long, slender and effeminate. His ears were pointed at the top and twisted as he listened. He talked a soft, purring dialect of the range and desert, his tone metallic.

He was known and remembered wherever he had been. He threw a good rope when he rode the thick mesquite farther east down Llano River and he was familiar with the salt grass methods along the Gulf Coast. The white riders on the bayous did not know whether he was darky, chink or white. He moved westward rather precipitately when he had shot two white riders who challenged his right to eat at the same long café table with them. He wasn't Mex. or dago, redskin nor any other familiar range race. He was proud, dangerous and as unexpected as a snake or cat.

He went by the name of Yoka. He never explained his name. Few liked him. Those who did could not explain their taste. A queer jigger Yoka was; as amusing as a darky in a white outfit, possessing the rare power of talking a cow down. Sometimes a steer is bad or a heifer mean, full of treachery and exceedingly dangerous. Brahma blood is apt to be that way—fast, powerful and sneaking.

Yoka would whine and whimper to one of these brutes in an ugly mood, and presently the pawing and bellowing would relax, the red eye half close and the charmed animal would actually settle down to chew a cud. But the majority against him crowded Yoka's spirit. He could not hide his resentment at taunts thrown against him, the mean bullying challenges of ignorant and cruel riders toward some one different and inexplicable.

Yoka's courage was as treacherous as his lurking watchfulness. He would slink along, betraying all the symptoms of fear. He would writhe like a man afraid. He would fairly invite the clods or melon rinds thrown at him. Then, just when he seemed about to run, he turned on "Blow Jack" Cabro and shot him dead. He drew his knife on another occasion to slash the face of "Amigo, the Handsome" till the *cabellero* had neither nose, cheek nor ears—a horribly efficient job of carving in the art Amigo long had practised. And he stole Juana Cravelo, who admired him much in her broad-hearted way. He took the girl to the Silent Range and reclaimed the Baby Hand ranch, ousting the snakes and rebuilding the fences and cabins to suit himself or according to the desires of Juana.

And Juana was very happy. She had drawn an ace of a husband. Her man treated her fondly, was exceedingly kind and brought a doctor and a mid-wife much against their will when the time came. And her baby was a boy, named by the father Yama. The other name was Brown, only no one ever called Yoka "Brown" except formally when he appeared in town to buy supplies or sell cattle. The boy Yama was at three years of age a thin, long-limbed, naked youngster, active and alert beyond his years, who played about the *rancho* in the early and late hours of the day, but in midday curled down in the bright purpled shadows of boulders or washed in the cañons up from the outfit. His mother fretted a good deal about the youngster who was as lively and difficult to keep track of as a yearling cat. Yama played with strange creatures. Apparently he knew the snakes by name, and the wild birds feared him. He would creep up to a calf or colt lying down, jump on to its back and, by clinging fast, hand and toe holds, no matter how angrily or fearfully the animal pranced and threw itself, would ride it.

Then the thing dreaded by Juana happened. Her boy disappeared. Toward afternoon one spring day Yama had walked up the *rancho* cañon and left his bare footprints in the sand of the dry wash. When night fell he had not returned. In the morning Yoka and two riders followed the tracks up the winding, dry stream bed into the heavy timber belt. There they found another track in the stone dust. A cougar with five claws on each paw had come in behind the boy who had—some of the time where the sand was hard—walked on his toes like a dancer.

Jerry Reel, one of the two cowboys, exclaimed his horror, but Yoka laughed in a high, shrill, brassy voice. The other rider, Garcia Valsco, grimaced with rolling eyes and crossed himself. Around the next bend but one they found where the claws of the trailing cougar had dug deep, and with scratching, slipping haste had raced up the line of the boy's tracks. A scuffle had ensued, after which the big cat turned back to enter the brush, with no sign of the boy thereafter.

Yoka looked slyly at the two riders, grinning. The cow hands blinked, drew away nervously and, as their horses were smelling the cougar, they let the animals race back down the cañon. They did not tarry. Drawing their time, both left the Silent Mountains, all through with the Baby Hand brand. They saw Juana bent in grief, wailing her sorrow while Yoka looked on, apparently amused.

"He's all right," they heard Yoka tell the woman.

But on the following night, when the two cowboys had camped at the Half Way Spring, Juana arrived on horseback and declared that she, too, was all through with the Silent Range. And Jerry, finding she was afraid and penniless, gave her his three months' wages and took her home to La Bajada where presently he persuaded her to marry him. And the wandering cowboy settled down in Little Bend where he did a good stroke of business, sufficient to establish him with a brand of his own, the Question Box.

YOKA learned of this some time afterward. He snarled his rage in the Tillway station beyond Colorado Mountain. Those who saw his anger were inclined to be neutral in such a personal matter. At the same time the fellow's rage was chilling to their blood. He hissed, spit, growled and slithered back and forth with his back humped and his eyes squinting, curiously feline in his gliding grace. He seemed rather to put on most of his gestures as though for effect, but he bought a lot of ammunition for his rifle and sharpened his long sheath knife on a razor hone. When Yoka left to ride on into the southeast toward Little Bend, Frank Dongey stepped to the long distance telephone and sent word on ahead to Jerry Reel.

"Much obliged, Frank," Jerry replied. "I'd kind of lost track of my suspicions."

Jerry left his rancho with the kiss of his wife warm on his lips. He rode through the Wampum Belt Mountains to the edge of Roselight Desert and saw a rider coming up out of the wide valley toward the mountains. The rider swung from the train to enter a gulch over west of where Jerry was waiting. This enabled the two to meet, so to speak, under the auspices of the stars and have it out. Jerry would not shoot from ambush, though Yoka unquestionably intended to strike from cover. However, when there was nothing else to do, Yoka rode up to do his worst. Jerry was not only a bit the quicker, he was much the straighter shooter, and so the man, Yoka died with three bullets in him, one in the forehead above the eyes.

Except for the fact that some branded cattle now ranged among the wild of the Silent Range and the Baby Rancho fell again into abandonment, there was little change in the mountains. Juana and Jerry, however, rode after a time over to the place. Juana desired to obtain some mementoes of her first born. She was still aching in her heart at the thought of her baby boy who had been carried away by the big, five-toed puma.

When they arrived at the *rancho*, the quiet of the scene was unspeakable. House cats lurked along the shadows, hunting birds. Within, though five months or so had elapsed since Yoka was lost in the Wampum Belts, the appearance was that he had only just ridden up the cañon. No one had been there. Canned goods, dried beef, smoked ham and bacon, a spare rifle over the fireplace and other things gave the impression of recent occupation. Juana found all the things she had longed for—toys, little dishes and trivialities a baby would naturally love. While she was gathering these, Jerry strolled out around, looking the scene over.

Out by the corral he found something that bade him pause. Lying stretched on the ground, as if it had just fallen dead, was a cougar. The brute was of great size, nearly ten feet long, Jerry's estimate. Only when he went closer did he see that the animal had been dead a long time, and the hot sun and arid wind had withered the gaunt frame, drying out the flesh. The carcass was occupied by an army of ants whose industry had cut away flesh and hide to the roots of the hair, tufts of which blew from the loosed carcass like milkweed, dandelion or cottonwood seeds.

In the center of the forehead was a hole, a chip of the skull having fallen in. The lips, drawn back from the old, yellow feline teeth gave the brute a particularly sinister expression. The very hollows where the eyes had been were full of ominous shadows. Jerry Reel had read trails of cattle, horses and other range creatures. He now harked back to his ride up the cañon where he had seen the tracks of a five-clawed cougar among those of a child.

He now poked away the hair of the pads of this evil brute and, staring at them, he ransacked back in his memory for exact data. He fitted these paws to those tracks. He could not be mistaken; this was the same cougar that had carried away the boy. His first thought was, of course, of his wife. He caught a canvas tarp which was hanging over a tie rail where it had been folded and thrown when the last wagon load of supplies was brought in to the Baby Brand ranch and spread it down beside the wasted skeleton. He scraped and rolled up the bones and hair of the dead cougar, the carcass crumbling, its dust blowing in the wind, and then carried the dry mess in the tarpaulin into the mesquite where his wife need never be tormented by this reminder of the animal which had carried away her baby boy.

Then, being of an economical instinct, Jerry brushed the tarp clean and carried it back to where it belonged in the storehouse. The place was a good ranch. Its isolation was in favor of its attraction. Considerable profit could be made by development. The signs were of a good herd of cattle, run wild in the mountains. With his outfit Jerry was sure he could make it pay. Surely, for a man of parts and ability two ranches are better than one. The careless cowboy had become a responsible, ambitious citizen. Unquestionably his wife had been the making of him. He could send Billy Cohoma into this country with the assurance of adequate financial backing, a whack-up on profits, and the foreman would surely be a good superintendent. And besides, Billy had lately married and was now restless for a ranch of his own.

Or Jerry could take over the Baby Brand, leaving Billy down on the Question Box. On broaching the subject to Juana, she smiled happily at the idea. She loved this place. She confessed to the foolish idea that Yama, her son, was alive. Despite the passage of more than five years since his disappearance, hope had not departed. She knew this could not possibly be a true idea, and yet the feeling was strong in her soul that her child needed her. Jerry stared. How could she know? He did not tell her of the dead cougar. Neither did he tell her of something else as amazing as it was distresssing to think about.

He had found tracks which he had recognized unmistakably. The boy was alive. He had grown a good deal in five years, and he walked most of the time on his toes, but where he stepped plantigrade, his weight on his heels, the shape of his feet—long, narrow and with spread toes at times—would not be denied. The boy was past eight years of age now. And he hunted with these Silent Mountain cougars. He had come down to the old *rancho*, where he circled the carcass of the dead cougar so often his feet had worn a trail in the hard, baked clay.

Jerry was sorry for the poor chap. Loving his wife so much, the rancher could only sympathize with her grief. Yet he dreaded and hesitated to tell her what he knew was the terrible truth. The he-cougar had carried the baby human back into the mountains and had given him over to be the plaything of the kittens of his spouse. Now the boy had become a wild thing, hardly human. He was growing up with the savage beasts. The cougars played and romped together. The litters hunted in a pack like wolves, guided by the superior child intelligence of their playmate. And Reel, having known the father of the child, having been witness to the man's strange powers over beasts, could only wonder at the man who, by his smiles, must have realized the cougar would not harm his offspring—if indeed, he had not been in league with the distorted panthers of the Silent Mountains.

Juana allowed Jerry to ride away to hire help, to turn Billy Cohoma into a full-fledged ranch superintendent of the ranch they were leaving and to bring in whatever supplies were needed. When he returned he found his wife shining with excitement.

"Jerry!" she cried. "Yama's alive! I heard him up in the mesquite. It was bright moonlight, and I heard him calling. When I answered I heard him laugh as he walked along the edge of the mesquite. Oh, I know it was Yama! I couldn't be mistaken. But he would not come near."

"He's run wild, dear girl!" he told her.

"Oh, yes!" she laughed. "He escaped the cougars. We must catch him, you know. Oh, he'll be sly! I've seen his tracks up the cañon in the sand."

Jerry nodded. No use to argue with a woman. Nevertheless, he was glad she knew and took the news so well. At the same time he wondered what manner of boy Yama would be when caught and brought down out of the mountain thickets. The mother had not realized the truth that her son was a cougar boy, reared ferociously with lurking felines.

THE five men Jerry had brought in to help drive down the cattle, now thoroughly wild, did not miss the tracks of the boy in the sand. Their horses shied at these footprints or at the whiff of scent left by the strange human's passing. They talked about the matter, but Jerry made no explanations. How could he let them know the sorrow of his wife? At the same time when they talked of "Wild Injun," "Crazy Man" and even of "one o' them g'rillas," he forestalled possible reckless cruelty of the hard-bitted mesquite and border riders through fearful superstition.

"If you have a chance, drop your rope on him," Jerry ordered. "If you stretch him out, don't shoot. I'll kill any man who draws a gun on the kid. He's just a kid anyhow. Look't his tracks! No danger yet to women."

Perhaps one or two of the riders would have shot a wild boy to rid the range of a dangerous menace. They heard the weird cries of the ranging were-child at night, just singing to himself or answering his wide-flung hunting mates. The sound added to the discomfort of the riders caught out and compelled to sleep away back up in the range. At the same time their curiosity mingled with their uncanny dreads.

Plenty of work held the men to the job. The cattle, which had lived well as a result of three wet seasons, were wild and mean to handle, but all the men were mesquite, jungle and Brahma drivers and ropers. They presently had a hundred head of feeders brought down to be driven to the shipping pens and out to the rich grazing lands to be fattened. The question of ownership was readily settled by Mrs. Jerry Reel who, as Yoka Brown's widow, had her own claim, and the guardianship of Yama Brown Reel clinched the claim since the uncaught boy's interests were now paramount.

At night the unpleasant cries came down out of the mountains, cougar scream and boyish wailing yell. All heard it. The mystery of the Silent Range, long a tradition, did not lose now in the retelling as the cowboys talked it over. Bit by bit the truth was segregated. And one night when Juana slipped away up the cañon, as her tracks betrayed she was accustomed to doing, Jerry followed. By the moonlight he saw in the breadth of flat sandy dry bottom where she sat down to talk into the shadows.

After a time Jerry heard an answer. He heard talking back and forth in purring, cooing, murmuring sibilants. Then three shadows crossed the pale, shimmering surface of sand, two couchant felines not accustomed to this woman. The other was a slender, tawny youth, a boy, who drew near and presently sat down by the mother. There they were, two stalwart cougars lying questioningly at a little distance and the were-cat child.

Jerry could not understand the croonings and purrings. He understood the situation, however. The mother had been unable to win the child back to humans or down to the *rancho* outfit. She was afraid to trust any one in her dilemma. But Jerry was a better hunter than the cats themselves. He threw a long, pencil-size rawhide *riata* and dropped its noose to snare the wildling. Thus he captured the boy and, with a whoop, drove the two cougars away into their native mesquite.

Juana rejoiced. Yama was a snarling, clawing, biting wild animal when his stepfather tied him up, hands and feet, to carry him down to the buildings. Long since Jerry had figured out what was best to do. He put a stout brass-studded dog-collar on the boy's neck, and chained him to a long wire by a sliding ring. A comfortable shack, dark and well aired gave shelter for the lad. Plenty to drink and plenty to eat was assured. And thus Yama returned to the haunts of his own kind.

The cowboys never had seen such a spectacle before. They would sit around on their heels, talking to the boy. They told him stories. They played the French Harp for him. They fed him raw meat on the sly despite Jerry's not too strict orders to the contrary. And they admired the boy's skill and craft, catching jackrabbits which came down their trails in the mesquite under his sliding chain to the waterhole. Yama waited with unexampled patience for hours to have a chance to spring upon these lank hares.

The riders now all knew of Juana's son. Their hearts went out in sympathy to both the mother and the boy. At the same time they listened to the lad's midnight cries with chilled forebodings. They discerned glowering green eyes in the brush and found the paw prints of cougars which came, sometimes bringing raw veal or venison for the captive who answered their purring with guttural snores of his own. They would have killed these visitors but for Juana, who went into hysteria at the suggestion.

"No! No!" she cried. "You must not touch them. They are Yama's kin. And one—he says that one—"

She hesitated in her speech. Apparently Yama had made her understand something for which she had no equivalent words in the language of the cattle range. She alone could at first approach the captive. She would sit beside him on the steps of his kennel cabin while he purred or struggled to control his tongue. Her caresses soothed him, as she stroked his odd, pointed ears, like his father's. Slowly but surely he harked back to his baby words. His memories and associations bridged the wild hiatus in his years. He emerged into humanity again. He united the training his feline foster mother had given him with the human habits and thought which he obtained from his mother and from the kindly cowmen.

When the collar was taken off, he readily entered the big house to prowl along the walls and curl up on the hearthstone of the fireplace or stretch his lean limbs and gaunt figure in the sunshine, basking. He did not forget the learning of the mesquite byways and wash caverns of the mountains while he absorbed the wisdom of the human outfit. He would carry his primer booklets through the thick cactus, easing along unscathed by straight prickly pear thorns or hooked cholla spines, to worry the printed language and understand the pictures like a cougar kitten with a bird.

Gentle horses would cringe to Yama's touch. He could walk among the wildest cattle by day, pulling at the horns of the ugliest bulls, kicking calves with his bare feet or pulling the tail of gaunt cows. But at night when he crouched and started across the moonlit barrens—at sight of him the fattest cow would stampede with her tail in the air, driven frantic by a scream like that of a hungry two hundred-pound cat.

Yama walked and rode alone. When he had become accustomed to horses and the rancho work, he liked to go up into the Silent Mountains and bring down cattle which had evaded and escaped the best efforts of the whole outfit. How did he do it? He would turn his odd eyes to squint at the men who tried to solve his secret. On foot he would circle around a bunch of a hundred head, holding them—steers, cows, heifers—in a mass with the calves inside and a barrier of pearly horns quivering like the strange crooked thorns of some living cactus hedge, a huddle of alarm and despair. Yama did easily alone what seven good men could not do at all. At the table, eating, the boy gave his companions the conniptions. Not that he was so savage and messy, for he was perfectly clean and even rather strictly formal, but they understood his throaty warning not to lay hands upon bread or pie, pone or meat within the circuit of his wide half-moon at the table end. And what came within his reach remained untouched by any but himself, though it were a barbecued quarter of veal.

Juana loved her boy. She was proud of his accomplishments. He would take from her what no one, not even Jerry Reel himself, could hint at. And Yama played with her other babies as no one else could do. He crept and romped with them and he carried the toddlers out into the mesquite, teaching them strange tricks of hide and seek, catch and carry, watch and wait. Juana did not know just what to make of this, especially when Yama came in one time badly scratched by claws, with a bloody knife, and bringing Jackie, her boy, whimpering with excitement. Yama laughed without mirth. He would not explain anything.

Two riders, a day or so later, noticed vultures circling and went to see what was dead. They found a cougar cut and slashed to pieces, an evil cat with a crooked back and misshapen paws. They told Jerry, who went to look more closely at this place of combat. The huge brute had been disemboweled and its throat cut.

"So old Crooked Back wouldn't play gently with Jackie, eh?" Jerry suggested casually to Yama.

"He was ugly and he was always bad," Yama shrugged his shoulders.

"We'd better be rid of some more of them," Jerry remarked quietly. "They eat too many calves and colts."

"Not so many." Yama shook his head. "You kill, perhaps, the ones which keep down the rabbits, who would overrun the mountains but for us, I mean for the cats. What are a few calves compared to a rabbit for every blade of grass?"

"But do they all kill calves?" Jerry inquired casually.

The boy-cat hesitated. The man saw furtiveness and doubt in the expression of Yama's gesture.

"I know what you mean," the youth presently answered slowly. "I go get. Crooked back, he no good. So with some more. A bad bunch, I say."

IN A WEEK Yama had dragged down five cougars, characteristic Silent Mountain animals with deformities of paws and bodies and, doubtlessly, of mind and spirit. One of these was a creature with a horrible head, much too large for so emaciated a body. Yama had killed them, two with knives and three with the heavy revolver he had been taught to use.

"You'll be satisfied now?" the youth demanded with a sidelong, uneasy glance. "You don't have any more killed? You make them, the boys, stop trying to kill cougars now?"

"You want to be cat-killer-in-chief?"

"Leave them to me?" The boy showed his white teeth.

"That's all right," Jerry laughed. "You know the bad actors which need killing. The others—we'll be friendly, eh?"

"Yes," Yama nodded, clearly with great relief.

Accordingly, the riders were told it was Yama's job to kill the bad cougars. This was quite a joke. In the cattle country the idea was that all the cats, the big ones, were bad. Yama argued differently. He said that one cat ate rabbits, another ate birds, a third hunted deer, perhaps. Some would eat grass at times, devouring brouse, berries and the like, going for long periods taking only occasional meat.

"I know one. He eats rats, mice, gophers and prairie dogs," Yama grinned.

"You've quite a range of acquaintance, I'd say," a cowboy who had drifted in from Cornell University suggested.

"You bet!" Yama nodded for he could see the joke.

Yama rode into town with the others. Tank had been organized at the shipping point on the new railroad north of Silent Mountains. Here the accommodations were not unusual in the cattle country. A big cutting pen into which were driven shippers, by brand or purchase, was the chief feature of the new settlement. But the single street boasted dance-hall, bank, general store, hotel and sundry other town necessities. The Baby Hand brand boys romped in to enjoy a Saturday night on occasion.

His partner was picked by his friends. She was Maria Travance, a slender and pretty girl. She was one of the first to wear golf knickerbockers in the Red Wastes. She carried herself with an attractive aloofness and a certain impudence or insouciance, yet watched well her step. She was attracted to Yama immediately and Yama walked the floor around her with possessive tread.

Her skin was remarkably like his in paleness and texture. Her eyes were ever so little aslant, dark and changing color from gold to purple, from nearly black to light brown. When she walked, her feet hung limply on her ankles, and she glided with that same curving feline gracefulness which characterized Yama's gait, even to rising at times on her toes as though in sheer exuberance of eager strength.

The boys had to explain the customs and forms to Yama, hold him in restraint, for he was a savage monopolist, having held the hand and looked into the eyes of this fair young woman who was more than amused by the handsome youth of whom she had already heard some strange rumors. She was herself hardly less mysterious than the youth—smiling, seemingly indifferent and yet on the instant resenting with feral lack of warning any overt trespass or evil insinuation.

"Big Hank" Trobel alone was all out of sympathy with the youngster. For one thing, he despised cats. Yama had won his own place in the community. He rode with the best of them. He had quickly acquired the art of the lariat. He was, as indicated, a master of the round-up work. His eagerness to learn was both youthful and human. But he had learned to walk like cats in a mountain den among a family of cougars. To some he personified grace, but Big Hank Trobel felt his back crawl like a dog's when he saw Yama go strolling by and when he saw Maria Travance in Yama's arms, the one girl who had jeeringly scorned the burly wanderer into the Red Waste country, he was angrily beside himself.

Big Hank was merely a bullying vagabond rider, competent yet unimportant. Yama was the son of a *rancho* owner. Indeed, the boy had inherited property of his own from Yoka, his father, and Jerry Reel was meticulous in his honest accounting, seeing to it that the boy's profits were safely stored away in his mother's name while the youngster was taught the mathematics of humans. The cowboy needed to watch his step, and knew it.

Big Hank was treacherous. Having been a sailor on the seven seas, the mischance of a wreck had thrown him ashore on the pampas where he learned to ride from the *gauchos* Thence he drifted into the Red Waste pastures, bringing no one knew what miscellaneous lore gathered first hand with experience and adventure in the far places—especially in India with whose Naga tribes he claimed at times with hesitant lowering of voice a certain intimacy.

Seeing Maria rapt in the attention of Yama, Big Hank invited "Lank Susie" for a turn around the hall. As the two circled, he readily found the opportunity to come along beside the apparently engrossed Yama, his charming by the girl being the joke of the floor. The jealous rider essayed to trip the youth, but the boy who had walked with cats flexed his ankle so his foot dragged over the man's clumsy boot like an oar feathering a ripple. The man tried again and again, till the youth knew he must pay attention to the obvious challenge. Yama was in no mood to fight. He was happy beyond all his experience. He dreaded an interruption, but he saw his friends watching him with nervous expectancy and could not evade the issue the rival raised. Still he gave no sign.

Big Hank swung around again, nearer and nearer. He made his approach behind Lank Susie's hardly protecting figure. She was, indeed, but a narrow strip against the burly man's stalwart frame. Once more he thrust forward his heavy foot, but this time his victim did not glide clear. Instead, Yama dropped to the floor on all fours, seized the offending cowboy's high-heeled boot and twisted it. The sharp snap of a disjointed knee followed by the man's agonized howl as he pounded prostrate on to the waxed plank floor startled the quiet.

On his back, Big Hank looked up into the wide open lips and clenched teeth of the youth who was couchant on him. Instead, of using his teeth, Yama had drawn his knife and the point was quivering already through the rival's throat-skin. Paralyzed, hurt and facing the particularly horrible death at the blade of a knife pressed end-on against his neck, Big Hank was perfectly helpless physically, yet he looked the youth in the eyes. No coward, this big fellow! Instead he was brave in his folly. He whispered soft, low, indistinct whispering notes, and the blade was not driven home.

And presently Yama drew back, stood up, retreating and stared at the man, puzzled and fascinated. Something, neither Yama nor the spectators could tell what, had changed the impulse of a moment before to kill into an emotion entirely different. And Big Hank, the much-traveled wanderer, grinned despite his upset knee as he sat up, reared on to his sound leg and then hopped toward the dance-hall entrance to see the local surgeon who with a jerk replaced the ball in its socket. For many days Big Hank was obliged to walk on a crutch, but he did not mind that. Indeed, he had always found learning an expensive proposition, since man must ever pay much for what he knows. There are no bargains in knowledge. Big Hank gave a hint or two. Then he packed his mule and saddled his horse to ride away.

No one knew what became of Big Hank. When he had taken his departure, it was remembered that he had boasted rather enigmatically of possessing strange lore, including why tigers sometimes eat men and why leopards are the charmed creatures of the Himalaya foothills. He hated cats for himself, but this was because he knew the brutes. Before he went away he told Lank Susie to tell Maria Travance she had better burn catnip for her sweetheart. The truth is, perhaps, Big Hank was too sure he had the advantage of learning over the people of Red Waste and especially over a certain lad in the Silent Mountains who could not understand his own predicament.

MARIA TRAVANCE listened to Lank Susie with unusually marked attention. She, too, had wandered much and, despite her young years, possessed a great deal of miscellaneous information and intuition. She passed for English due to her rare excellence of manner and tactfulness. Yet had any one really been observant, he would have noticed a certain bluish tinge to the young woman's fingernails. And, moreover, the tops of her ears were pointed distinctly and her feet were long, narrow and beautiful. She was, in fact, more than superficially of the same breed as Yama Brown. She did not belittle the warning which Big Hank had sent her. Nor did she boast of it.

She instantly obtained a horse and rode out on the new Baby Hand *rancho* trail, though she had been awake all night, dancing as was her wont, the odd nautch-girl solo figures as well as the usual duos and Spanish figures. She arrived within four hours at the ranch, her horse dropping dead as she rounded the corner of the corral.

But Yama seemed to have known she was coming or had heard her horse. He was there to disengage her from the saddle. She caught him by his shoulders, pouring into his ears what neither ever told any one. He listened intently. He nodded, not smiling. He kissed her gratefully and proudly took her to introduce his sweetheart to his mother. And Juana, who had heard about this enchantress, regarded the young woman with searching gaze. Well satisfied, she took Maria into the cabin. Yama went immediately to the corral, though it was a blistering day, rode up the cañon and presently two of the boys lying in the shadow of a rock saw him go by at a gallop, despite the punishment to the horse on the grade in that hot, breathless air.

Yama was gone some time. He did not reappear for three days. Maria walked up and down the floor, turning and returning, her slender, beautiful figure sinuous as her shoulders moved back and forth. In the night Jerry and Juana Reel heard her soft footsteps as she paced the floor in her room. They, too, felt her anxiety, but what could be done? Attempts to find Yama had been futile. He had hung his saddle on a mesquite fork, thrown his bridle over it, turning the horse loose in the high grass flat, and vanished.

On the night of the third day, Maria suddenly was heard to utter a low cry. She ran out into the darkness and up the cañon by light of the stars. Jerry, Juana and the cowmen in the bunkhouse were all awakened by the young woman's strange moaning as she raced away. Jerry and two of his men hurried after her as soon as they could saddle horses.

The mountains were full of strange voices that night. The dark wind made the stars blink and the cats were walking the ridge backs, wailing. More than a mile up the cañon the three men saw ahead a staggering, stumbling shadow against the faintly glistening sands of the dry wash. To their greeting came answer, and they found it was Maria bearing Yama. She had him around the chest under his arms, and his feet dragged on the ground, a much heavier man than he looked. She exclaimed her gratification that the men were so prompt in coming to her assistance. She uttered odd cries, which were answered from up on the mesquite ridges and she expressed strange things in language they did not understand. She danced behind them as they carried the fainting Yama home.

When they examined the young man, he displayed no wounds or marks of any kind. Maria, however, declared he was desperately hurt, and she must do this and that. She built a tiny fire in the room on a sand box and burned in it bits of leaf and wax which filled the space with strong perfume. A darky who watched her for a few minutes presently turned to run out into the open branding space, dropped on his knees and began to pray with great and unaccustomed fervency. Two very intelligent Mexicans shook their heads and crossed themselves. The white men scratched their heads wondering what the Hades—

Yama was in a deep sleep. He was

limp. Some terrific experience had engrossed him. He responded to Maria's incantations and his mother's equally solicitous ministrations only after a day and three hours. Then he emerged, his eyes glowering in the dark of the night gloom. He sat up, shaking his head and stretching on his knees reaching with his hands, which opened and closed picking up the heavy goat'shair blankets in his finger tips, as if learning to use his arms again. He stood looking at his mother who did not quite understand her son and at his sweetheart who quite thoroughly knew him.

"You have done very well!" Yama remarked quietly to both of them.

This was all he would say about his experiences. He was exceedingly grateful to Maria for her warning. Her interest and her love had for him a power to overcome all the evils in the world. They must instantly be married, he declared. To this Juana gave willing assent, and the doings of the marriage *fiesta* would long be remembered by all those who participated. Sometimes Jerry Reel was puzzled to think how it had all come about. At the same time he was satisfied. Yama, the step-son, was a fine man, able to care for himself, his wife and his property.

Some time later when Yama and Maria had redeemed the old Curly Horn *rancho* site, Jerry was riding alone away up in the north end of the Silent Mountains range when he came to an obscure runway which seemed to lead out of the open desert from the direction of Tank, the cattle shipping and trade town, back into the higher Silent Mountains. He followed the trail until it ascended to a bench with some of the aspects of a mesa. The flat was grown to rather thick mesquite and much cactus. Crossing this on the trail, Jerry came to a steep slope, went down into a stony gulch and around a turn into a sandy flat. On the flat he saw stretched out no less than three cougars, all dried up and hollowed by winds and ants, their hair still fluffy in tufts on the skeletons.

And among these intact carcass shapes and skeletons were the bones of a human who had been torn to pieces. A revolver and a heavy knife, their butts still encircled by grisly hands lay rusted on the ground. The revolver cylinders were empty, and the skinning blade had been broken. Up the line of the wash were the skeletons of a horse and a mule with saddles and pack. Jerry recognized the outfit. He was looking at the remains of Big Hank Trobel. In the human skull was a lead revolver bullet.

Looking around curiously, studying the details as the wilderness man invariably does, Jerry soon discerned on a sliding talus slope among gnarly weed growths of shrubs and trees the entrance to a cave. He climbed to inspect it. The place was a mere hole in the mountain, veiled by mesquite. Sunshine in the opening reflected light within.

Beneath the rounded dome Jerry's eyes grew accustomed to the shadows. He at last was able to see clearly. On the level floor was huddled a cougar larger than any of the others. Lying curled up, the man was shocked for an instant by the thought that it might be alive. But this animal, too, was dead, withered in the arid atmosphere. And Yama had been here.

The cat-man had posted about this carcass his knife, revolver, with one shell emptied, lariat, belt of ammunition and even his raw-hide moccasins. And when Jerry sought without irreverence to discover the secret of this thing, he found three flattened bullets which had lodged in the animal when it was alive—bullets, unquestionably, from Big Hank's revolver. Yama had arrived too late to save his cougar mates in their fight with the bully.

And on ledges of the cavern Jerry found stowed away skulls, bright quartz stone and other trinkets. Among the rest he saw a fantastic stick with a shred of rag on it. Yama had carried that "dool" on the day the five-toed cougar had carried the child away to raise it like a cat with a litter of panther kittens. And this was where the human baby had learned his feline tricks.

Jerry could understand the natural history of it. At that, cringing a little, he looked over his shoulder as he felt the chill depression of the other things which were to his mind inexplicable. The mere physical conditions and developments could readily be studied out. The mental attributes were not so easily divined. Jerry was inclined to reckon such matters were none of his blamed business, anyhow, and he'd better be on the prod.

Nevertheless, his human curiosity could not ignore or deny the feeling of urge. Accordingly, some time later he took occasion to tell Maria of the fight scene which he had discovered. Minutely he described each detail, making no comment.

"Yes, I know, but I have not been to see." She shook her head. "Three bullets, you say, in the big cougar? If I tell you something, probably it isn't true. You know, my father was Copper Joe Travance, the Englishman. He married the pretty Sukheli, who came from India to Imperial Valley beyond Calexico and who is my mother. She has told me much nonsense, which I do not believe. Too much. She lived, a Naga girl, at Nikoto, her people having the pointed ears like me. Like Yama, too. When I see his ears, I like him ver' much as you know. He, too, is hill people in India. So Sukheli says we are cat tribe members who see in the dark and perhaps do much hunting. What I do not believe is she says when her sister, a leopard, is sick, she too is ill. And if the spotted jungle walker purrs, she sings. But if some *shikirri* shoots the leopard, the human is ver' sick, and maybe die. Don't you think my mother must be much strange to believe such foolishness? I do not. I am American. Like my father, I believe no such stuff and nonsense. But I remember one time when Yama was badly hurt and had no wounds."

She laughed, shrugging her shoulders with amusement. At the same time her eyes squinted, a puzzled frown in her forehead as she gave Jerry a sidelong glance to which he paid no attention except to say:

"We need not worry, Maria. Surely a human spirit is stronger than a cat's if we use it right."

At that, Maria gave an ecstatic little shiver and ran to baste the big rib roast she had in the oven of the Curly Horn brand kitchen range, while the 'Pache Indian breed cook was busy mixing up hot-bread dough. Jerry was glad he had comforted Yama's wife by his failure to jeer her half belief. Then Yama called him to go over to the water hole for a swim. The men stripped by the limpid spring pool. As he glanced at the long, ribby and supple figure of this half white, half India-Eurasian, Jerry's jaw dropped.

"Eh, Yama! Who's been shooting you? Those three bullet scars!" he demanded.

Yama started with confusion, throwing his arms and hands to cover the pits like healed-over bullet wounds, white and puckered in his skin. The young man blinked, his eyes searching earth and sky for the answer.

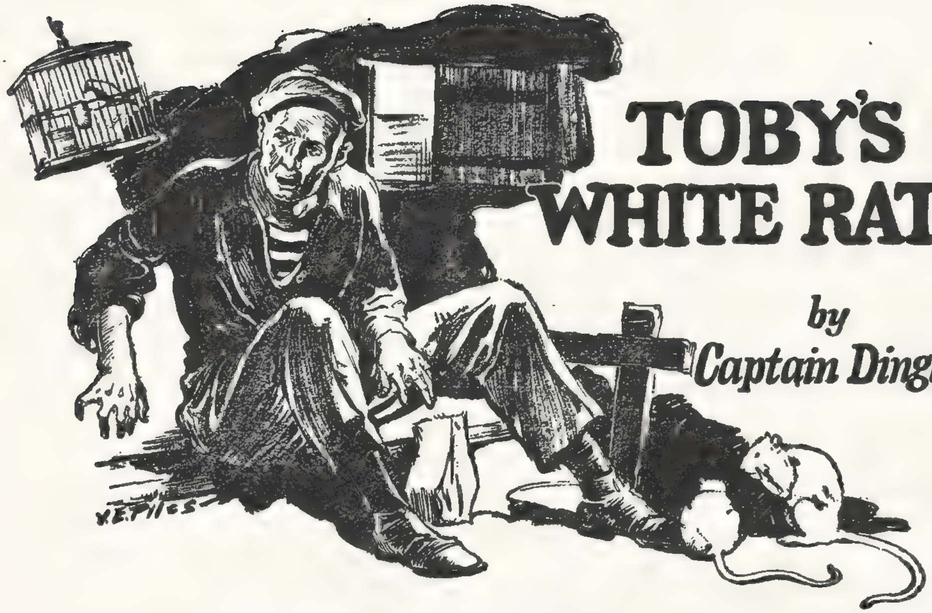
"Bullet wounds?" Yama grinned at last slyly and reminding Jerry of the bearing of Yoka, his father, when cornered. "Nobody has ever shot me yet. No! I have three ver' sore boils one time. Tha's all. Bad boils."

Jerry nodded, turned and plunged into the sweet water depths. He was conscious of having made a break, not minding his own business. The last thing in the world he would do was to hurt his step-son's feelings. When after a time Maria's sweet, high-pitched voice summoned them to eat, she glanced archly at Jerry, smiling:

"You have the good swim, I suspect. Why you look so funny, father dear?"

"The cougar in the cave was hit three times. Here, here—and here," Jerry replied significantly.

"I don't believe it!" she laughed, delighted to see that Jerry in his sympathy could understand.



TOBY'S WHITE RATS

by Captain Dingle

Author of "Ambition A. B.," "Kelp," etc.

TOBY had many points of resemblance to his two white rats. They had lost some hair; so had he. Their eyes were little, and glittering, and quick, and they had red rims, as if sewn into the lids with red wool; so Toby's eyes seemed to be. Sometimes Toby's old white rats revealed their teeth in a grin of distrust when startled; and so did Toby.

Toby had a bedraggled canary too, so old that its yellow had faded to dirty gray, its claws grown so long that getting off a perch was an intricate process of disentanglement, its song not even a memory. These pets shared with Toby a tiny box of a cabin in the forward house of the West Coast trader *Lorna*, and had known no other home for how long nobody knew except Toby. Toby was sailmaker of the old clipper. He had outlasted every man who was in the ship when he joined, and appeared likely to outlast not only the last newcomer but the ship herself. He and his queer pets were talked about wherever sailormen foregathered; and nowhere more resentfully than aboard the *Lorna*, with never much heed whether or not he could hear.

"Some'at queer about that old geezer, that ther' is," the new boatswain grumbled to the new Chips in the heat of a first dog-watch while the *Lorna* drifted lazily in the Doldrums. "Him and his blessed rats."

The boatswain had peeped in to say "howdo" to Sails the first day at sea, and had seen Toby's lips draw back in a toothful grin while the two ancient white rats with their bare patches and red eyes shrank back to the inner edge of the bunk they were playing on, and grinned in very much the same inhospitable fashion.

"That mouldy old bird, too," boatswain went on, "floppin' its scraggy wings and tryin' to screech at me as if it wuz a wild eagle instid of a half ounce of dyed sparrer."

"Queer's right," Chips rejoined, without much interest. "The mate told me as Sails has been in this here ship for ten year or more, and never ain't even been ashore, out or home, except to the nighest shop outside the dock gates wot sold bird seed. Feeds them rats on finest grain, he does. Look at 'em! Look at him if you pokes in yer head and frightens his pets."

But Toby cared little what men thought, and nothing at all what they said. He tended his queer pets with all the solicitude of a mother, talking to them in a queer, clumsy jargon as if, with only the vocabulary of sailortown and forecastles, he tried to fill the place of a much gentler, softer attendant. At times there dwelt a wistful, retrospective gleam in his red-rimmed eyes; but only his pets ever saw that, and they, being dumb creatures, could never know the thought behind the gleam.

The yarns men spun about him were mostly true, too. He had been in the *Lorna* for ten years. Nine thumping round trips; twice around Old Stiff each voyage; making almost a new suit of sails for her every voyage. And whether the port she loaded in was Taltal, Coquimbo, Iquiqui, or Valparaiso, Toby had no other interest in the place than whether or not there was a good grain store near the boat landing. He had been seen ashore just once in foreign ports, beyond the nearest grain store; that was when he frightened into flight the shopkeeper in Taltal who had sold him mouldy grain a year before. Toby chased the miscreant until he caught him, far into town, and made him return to make good the fault. At home ports he stayed aboard the ship. Almost always in home ports there was a store near the docks where parrots and monkeys chattered for buyers. So Toby had only to get permission to remain on board without pay until the ship signed on for a new voyage. It was not hard. Junior mates rarely objected to Toby keeping watch for them—without reward.

"But I tell yer I see 'im just afore we sailed this trip," a young able seaman insisted one day earlier in the passage when Toby was yet a subject for forecastle raking. "'E wos runnin' like blazes acrost the street wiv a parcel, lorst 'is 'at, and never knowed it. And white? Stiffen me! Just dodged a blessed fire engine, 'e did, and turned and shook 'is fistes at it and swore somethink fierce. I never see sich a face, lor' lu' me I didn't."

"Yer a liar, Huggins, he never goes ashore," came the ready retort.

And an elderly shellback, perhaps with a fellow feeling, broke up a promising argument by quietly remarking:

"You young fellers chucks words about like spray. Suppose Sails was ashore that time. Suppose he was scared stiff o' the noo traffic wot has come about since he used to go ashore reg'lar. I don't blame him. Them 'lectric cars and steam engines scares me, too, and they ain't noo to me neither. Takin' Toby full and bye, me lads, if you arsks me, I'd say as he don't go ashore no more, 'cept to buy food fer his pets, because he's afraid o' gettin' run over by a screechin' motor or somethin'. I got a good mind to stay by the ship myself next time home. 'Board ship's the place for a sailorman."

They laughed at that.

"If they sold rum inside the dock gates you might," said young Huggins.

WHATEVER the forecastle thought, Toby stood well with the Old Man, for he was a sailmaker. The older the *Lorna* grew, the more imperative the demands upon Sails. When clipper ships whitened the ocean routes so plenteously that every steamer passenger knew what a sailing ship looked like, canvas and gear was made so sturdy and honestly that sailmaking and rigging only became dire necessity at sea during the noteworthy bad passages. Usually the sailmaker spent much time patching old sails for the tropics, making fancy work for the poop ladders, with perhaps a new topsail or two to sew on at odd times. But in the *Lorna* the canvas had to help with the dividends. So with the gear. Toby was for ever taking the best of two sails to make one. The boatswain knew every bit of gear by personal handling before the Line was crossed. And poor though the material might be, the skipper knew, or soon learned, that when Toby delivered a sail to the mate as done, that sail had been sewn, roped, and cringled with the exquisite care of a young matron making her first layette.

So, when the ship drifted out of the doldrums into the trades, and from the trades into the blowy gusts farther south, and the stoutest foresail split from clew to reef-band, the mates might get hot with impatience, but the skipper never.

"Just hold on all, Mister, and leave it to Sails," was the Old Man's admonition. "No use breaking out the spare fores'l. Sails 'll have that mended before the watch is out."

And Sails did. Toby reported the sail ready to go aloft, and took his station to help send it up. The *Lorna* had not for many a voyage known the luxury of a full complement of hands; Sails did seaman's work when required, the same as Chips. In sending up a mended sail to the men waiting on the yard to bend it, Sails saw to the stops, and to the gantline, making certain that the head roping presented itself first to the reaching hands and not the foot. There were few enough men to hoist away. And the ship was uneasy, lacking the power of the fore course. The skipper looked on, hiding his impatience. The mates hid theirs too, though not so well. It had been a bad job of mending old Toby had to do, and the skipper could not very well show the mates that he was incapable of exercising the restraint he preached to them. Besides, when the last stop was knotted, and Sails reached his thin, talon-like hands high up the gantline for a pull, one scarcely noticed that only two other seamen stood to pull on the rope, and they were not of the best.

"Now bullies, sway away!" yelled the mate, dodging a spray.

"Way-hay-ah!" screamed Toby, his teeth gleaming as he put his weight to the rope.

"That's the stuff!" the Old Man chuckled. "That sail'll be drawing in fifteen minutes and as good as new, Mister."

"*Ting-tang, ting-tang!*" clanged the bell.

Four-bells in the first dogwatch. The mended sail dangled just under the foreyard. Men reached for a hold on it. Sails let go his hold on the gantline without a sound, and ran to his tiny cabin; the heavy sail descended almost to the deck before one of the mates sprang forward and caught a turn. Then while men cursed and even the skipper swore, and the ship plunged her bows deep for want of the foresail to lift and keep her away, the chief mate rushed furiously after Sails, no longer patient.

In the open doorway the mate paused an instant, glaring at a bent back, then darted in a strong hand and gripped Toby by the jacket. Toby snarled, swung around, spilling bird seed from a bag all over his bed, and bared his teeth in a menacing grin which made even an angry chief mate think twice. Two mangy rats scurried to cover beneath Toby's pillow. A faded canary flapped futile wings and uttered hoarse chirps.

"What d'ye mean running away from the job that way?" the mate demanded, yet withdrew his hand, for Toby's fingers played around the haft of the knife he had cut the bag string with.

"Leave me alone! Get out, d'ye hear? I know my work and I do it, but don't you meddle wiv me in here, see?"

Toby grinned; his white rats grinned; the mate left him and complained that he had no authority over crazy sailmakers.

"Leave him alone, Mister. He's queer. But you'll find that sail sets fine," the skipper told the mate, a trifle wearily.

And the mended sail did set perfectly. The mate and the second mate grumbled together about it at table; and the steward heard them and smiled. The steward had some sort of agreement with Toby by which the two white rats sometimes got a treat of cabin butter, and the steward got well paid for the stores he stole in the shape of fancy canvas drawn-work; a cover for his sea-chest, fringed and diamond knotted, port fringes, pantry shelf borders and whatnot. The arrangement bred a sort of intimacy which Toby seemed not to resent, and it was the steward who carried along the tale of the mates' bemoanings.

"You got 'em all hot, Sails. They wasn't doing a thing to your character at the table. Pulled a knife on the mate, didn't you?"

Toby's red-rimmed eyes had glittered at that, and his teeth showed.

"Me, I never pulled a knife on nobody in me life," he snapped, and the steward lost the urge to make fun of him that had taken him forward at first. But there still remained curiosity.

"Well, what made you leggo yer job when all hands was—"

"Four-bells struck. D'ye think I'm going to keep them pore creatures waitin' for their supper?"

Toby pottered about the bird cage, dusting a little clean sand on the base. The aged white rats regarded the intruder through the wire of their snug cage, with beady eyes and wrinkling snouts.

"You must think somethink o' them pets, Toby."

"Course I do," grunted Toby, ungraciously.

"If yer so fond o' rats as all that, then why don't you git married and have kids?"

Boatswain and Chips, in the adjoining cabin, related afterward that they heard Toby utter a strange, shivery yell, and a minute later they saw the steward dashing aft along the dark and streaming maindeck, bumping into things in his way as if stricken blind. The tale reached the skipper through the mates, who heard it by deepwater code; and there was no more mystery concerning a pair of stupendous purple eyes sported by the steward next morning.

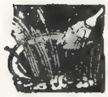
Soon the ship's company knew of the extraordinary affection for dumb creatures entertained by Toby Sails. The skipper, wise man, often spoke about animals when chatting of work with Toby. He had a small terrier himself, which did not thrive very well in the growing cold of the southern latitudes as the *Lorna* reached away Hornwards; he suggested that Toby take it along and nurse it with his pets.

"Don't like dogs. Hate 'em!" Toby muttered to that, and refused bluntly.

The skipper told the mate about it.

"Queer old fellow, Mister. Hates dogs. Perhaps he's got a twist in his nature that only lets him fancy rats and such like. If he wasn't such a darn good sailmaker—"

"Huh," grunted the mate surlily, "twist is right, sir. It ain't rats either; not all rats, anyhow. I saw him bring a big black rat out of the sail locker this very morning, had it by the tail he did, banged it against the rail and hove it overboard swearing like a printer. It isn't because they're rats he's crazy about those mangy pink-eyed brutes of his."



WHEN the hard weather canvas was all bent, and all the rigging set up, with preventers and chafing gear where needed, and lifelines all ready to stretch along at first appearance of real Cape Stiff weather, there was no longer time to bother about the vagaries of Toby Sails or his white rats and dilapidated canary. The *Lorna* breasted the growing surges stoutly, as she had done for many a voyage, and she needed no more care than any seamanly first mate could give her. But to make matters doubly secure, the skipper had the foremost of the two tiny cabins in the house battened up, moving Chips and the boatswain into the half-deck. There was plenty of room there, since the *Lorna* once carried eight boys and now boasted but four. And with that small berth boarded up against the seas, there was nothing forward to worry about. The galley door opened aft; so did Toby's room, alongside it.

Toby and the doctor never got along well. The doctor swore he had found traces of rats in his flour, and blamed Toby's pets. But Toby cared little for that. He did his work, and a bit more, ate his rations and fed his pets, while the seas grew greener and the gales blew colder. He fussed about in his little cabin, making warm coverings for the rats' and canary's cages, talking to the queer creatures who never seemed to care very much. Once a week he had a "field day," when he emptied his sea chest and overhauled his belongings. It was the act of an old deepwater sailorman, intended first of all to keep his clothes in good condition, but it served, as with other seamen, for an opportunity to pore over little private fetishes, pictures, trinkets, souvenirs of other days.

Toby had no pictures about his bunk. About the only visible thing there, except his sailmaker's bag and clothes in use, was the bag of food for his pets. But inside his sea chest were treasures. Only when he could shut the door and feel reasonably secure against intrusion did he lift the tray from the big camphorwood chest and explore the diddy box in one end of it.

There were things as queer as his pets. A shoe, well scuffed and broken; a piece of newspaper yellow with age; a photograph or two. On the day that the lifelines were first stretched along he sat all snug with the diddy box beside him, listening dreamily to the thunder of the seas and the roar of the wind overhead, feeling at ease, knowing the old *Lorna* and what she could do far better than her skipper knew. The swishing of broken water around his door outside gave him no uneasiness at all. That regular, clacking, throbbing note right above the house gave him no cause for fear; he knew that of old; it was simply the effect of age upon the quarterblock on the foreyard; and whenever stress was upon the topsails, the chain sheet always set up that throbbing clack.

Toby could enjoy one of his rare moments of entire detachment from the ship and live again in his past. The uneven teeth grinned through thin lips as he carefully untied the string from a little package of photos. He set the package down while he trimmed the poor lamp to give better light. He burned his hand, and drew back cursing shrilly, staring and jibbering at the lamp as if it were something alive and responsible. And he did not cease to revile the cause of his burned hand, even when the pictures lay spread before him.

There was a picture showing a mean little shop in a mean little dockside street, with a figure standing in the doorway wearing an apron. It was a man's figure. And in the window were cages of birds, and rats, and a monkey. One might almost recognize that aproned figure in the doorway without the aid of the bold name on the signboard—

TOBY SMALL BIRD FANCIER

Toby's eyes gleamed at that picture. There was pride in the queer little man as he gazed at the evidence of his one-time importance. He had been in business for himself, he had. He removed the coverings from his cages to show his pets that picture.

"Useter live there in style, you did, me lads," he chattered to them.

Then he turned up another photo, and went gray and haggard and wild of eye. He covered the cages. His worn, twisted hands opened and shut, turning the picture this way and that. His teeth grinned and clicked.

It was a poor enough photograph; clumsily done, with all the aids of head irons, shabby property magnificence and all. It was just a likeness of a woman and a boy. Somehow one might feel they belonged to that shop of "Toby Small Bird Fancier." It was perhaps taken on the boy's birthday. All his clothes were so arrestingly new.

Toby carefully laid the pictures back in the folded bit of yellow newspaper, and lifted the cage covers to whisper long and earnestly to the indifferent inmates.

The seas swished against his door; the slashing of rain was sharp against the house. He felt glad that his berth was to leeward of the galley; the warmth was good for his pets. He still heard that rhythmic clacking of the chainsheet in the quarterblock, and paid no more heed to it than he did to another, heavier, less customary thud which might be anything from a whanging clearance port to a cask adrift somewhere. None of these things need bother him. He would be called if all hands were needed. He gently replaced the covers of the cages for the night, and began to gather up his treasures. He had tied one hitch to the string about the bit of newspaper and the pictures, when he heard shouts outside. There was a heavy crash, which he knew was a boarding sea, and a steep roll to leeward. Then he heard the screech of a squall, and men's shouts near by. Somebody thumped on his door in passing.

"Shake a leg, Sails! All hands!"

OUTSIDE was darkness, and flying water, and uproar. The ship reeled under the squall until her lee bulwarks were a white smother which glared through the blackness like a surf on a black shore. She roared through the water at a speed which made of the boarding seas a whirling deathtrap for any man unlucky enough to lose his hold and tumble into it. Sails stumbled into a milling crowd about the foremast. The skipper megaphoned orders from the invisible poop. Mates bawled, and men groped, the watch below still foggy with sleep.

"Get the sail off her for the love o' the lord, Mister!" The megaphone roared it out, and two able mates saw to it.

"Leggo all t'gallant halliards!"

And when three topgallants flogged aloft, threatening to tear loose the spars—

"Haul up the foresail, m' sons, and lively!" pealed the command, while the over-pressed ship lay over so steeply that the topgallant yards refused to lower all the way.

Toby darted to the foretack, the place of greatest risk until the clewlines got a good start hauling up the heavy course. The flogging topgallantsails made the old *Lorna* shudder to her keel rivets. The second mate rallied a crowd of men in the streaming welter of the rope-fouled deck and fought to clew down the stuck yards. A great sea foamed up to leeward, hoary and hissing, falling aboard with a crash, hurling men helter-skelter, burying the ship until the voice in the megaphone aft screamed anxiously—

"Hold on for your lives, men!"

In the moment of supreme stress, when even Toby Small felt qualms regarding the old *Lorna's* survival, the worn bolts of the quarterblock under the foreyard gave way at last. With the half lowered foretopgallant sail tearing away aloft, and the partly hauled-up fore course thundering below, the abrupt releasing of the fore lower topsail sheet was too much for the fine old clipper. The foremast smashed midway between deck and hounds, falling in a raffle of iron and wood, hemp and canvas, with a mighty crash about the forward house. The sudden release of all that pressure allowed the *Lorna* to right herself; but now her troubles took on a new and more terrible phase, for a sudden upflaring of light in the galley and the lusty yell of the doctor inside told of something upset over the stove, and swift, terrible fire.

"Open the door! ——! Open it!" screamed the doctor, beating frenziedly at the port glass, tearing it open and letting out a black swirl of greasy smoke.

Men and mates picked themselves out of the chaos of tumbling seas and tangled gear. But they could not open the galley door. That was barricaded as securely as if by evil intent of an enemy of the ship's cook. Men stood aghast, for there was no longer a doubt as to the catastrophe. The doctor's slush copper had by some piece of carelessness been left in such a position that when the last terrific reeling of the ship capsized it, the inflammable grease poured over the stove which was almost redhot from the next day's bread baking.

Above the howling of the passing squall, and the frantic bawling of the mates and men trying to get the after sails off the ship to readjust her trim to the loss of all forward canvas, above the screaming of the thoroughly terrified doctor, rang out a shrill cry scarcely to be attributed to anything human. Swinging an ax, mouthing wildly, his face white as ashes, his eyes glaring red in the leaping light now surrounding the cook's silhouette in the porthole, Toby leaped back from a brief, utterly hopeless assault upon his own door, which was also jammed by the wreckage, and smashed away furiously at the frame of the port.

"Duck out o' the way, you old monkey!" Toby screamed at the doctor, while splinters flew, and men tore helplessly at the tangled obstruction.

There was more than a simple fire there; more than the mere loss of a foremast. The squall might pass, as it seemed to promise, but the strong wind was blowing as if it meant to carry the ship clear around Old Stiff; and with the foremast gone there was no means of running the ship off the wind and keeping the fire localized forward. She must swing into the wind, and that meant that the flames, fanned by the gale, would spread aft, take hold of the splintered pine so plenteously laid to hand, and so impossible of swift clearance, until the ship became a blazing furnace in the midst of a sea too murderous for a boat to live.

"Get me out for —— sake!" squealed the doctor.

"Get a move on, Sails! Get another ax, Chips," roared the mate.

Toby chopped like a madman, his teeth grinning in his queer mask of a face, which showed, if any emotion at all, not desperate courage so much as terrified desperation.

"Get axes!" bellowed the skipper, running part way along the monkey bridge, but not daring entirely to leave his post of command.

"The axes are among the wreck!" yelled Chips, half drowned.

"Sails 'll git 'im out," cried a shivering seaman.

"Good old Sails!"

"Give it socks, Toby! Another one like that!"

Toby grinned and smashed. The doctor took his face away, bleeding from a splinter. Men never ceased trying to clear the débris from the house; men still toiled to get the sail off aft and set a main spencer which had never been set in years, so that the ship might have her chance, small though it seemed likely to be.

The galley bulkhead gave before Toby's flogging ax. The hole was small, the space between twisted wire and splintered wood scarcely larger. But into it darted Toby, all heedless that cruel shards of pine and jagged wire ends flayed him, or that the infernal smoke choked him. Fire licked his face and he screamed. The doctor seized his arms, in a frenzy of impatience to be rescued, his own galley apron and dungarees already burned from his agonized body.

"Brayvo, Toby! Lend him a hand, lads! 'E don't bear no grudges, Toby don't! Good lad, Sails! Take his ax, boys, and bust out that hole for him!"

The voices rang. Men who knew how little was the love between Sails and the doctor, thrilled to see Toby's spare, dried-up form wriggle through that deadly aperture. But Toby cared nothing for their cheers. It is doubtful if he heard them. He held on to the ax, and the doctor, too scared to notice very much, took it upon himself to thrust out through the hole without waiting for Toby to help him.

That was well. Toby paid him no attention. As soon as he stood on the galley floor, he dashed a hand across his eyes to clear his vision, set his teeth in a ratlike grin of desperation, and hurled an assault upon the bulkhead which separated the galley from his own little cabin. And the crackling of the fire maddened him with fiendish voices ever at his ear: voices which he recognized all too easily. He might have stopped long enough to fling the galley flour barrel upon the fire. It stood against the coal bunker, open, just as the doctor had left it after making bread. But Toby heard voices. They flogged him on with a sting like red-hot wire tips. He screamed now almost without cessation as the fire flicked at him. He cringed from it, yet never backed an inch, smashing at the bulkhead as if dear ones lay beyond it in direst need of him.

And so, for all the world need know, there were dear ones there. That was Toby's tragedy; his secret. His reason for hating fire, his reason for fearing a slightest burn. It was his life that lay behind that blazing partition; all, that is, left to him of the only real life he had ever known. That dreary little bird shop, with its rats and monkeys and birds; that poor photograph of a woman and a little boy, all dressed up stiffly in Sunday best, and kept stiffly in position by a poor photographer's iron rods and braces; that old scuffed shoe and bit of yellow newspaper were all he had to remind him of the little home he had once set up from his voyaging; all left to remind him of a fire that had devastated the house and shop, out of which he had saved but his boy's cherished pets when assured that his wife and boy were safe, only to find after all that they were not.

No wonder he had cursed the fire engine that nearly ran him down. No wonder men believed him queer because he refused to quit the ship. He was queer. Toby would always be queer. He was so queer that he battered his way through fire and wreckage to his own poor bunkside, to snatch up his precious yellow newspaper package, and to fling his blankets thickly about the cages of the mouldy canary and the pink-eyed, half-hairless rats before fighting his way out with them to where he met the mate and a gang of men bursting through the hole he had made to put out the fire.

He was whimpering. He was burned to a crisp in spots. But they had to wait until he fell in a swoon before they could pry his hands from the cages and the little yellow newspaper package. But he had saved the doctor's life, undoubtedly, whatever the urge had been that drove him to do it. And, more, he had opened the way to save the ship and perhaps all hands.

"Carry him aft, men, I'll take care of him," the skipper told them, and followed, while the mates and the rest of the men set to work in the moderating gale to put the old *Lorna* in shape to complete her voyage.

WHEN the pilot boat rose and fell on the long sea outside Valparaiso, Toby sat on the harness cask and chattered to his pets. He had rebelled at being taken care of in the cabin, simply because nobody there appeared to realize the importance of quiet and privacy to a couple of ancient white rats and a doddering canary. Always there would be somebody coming in to chatter, and Toby hated chatter—men's chatter.

So he had taken his own way of recovering from his burns, in a place where he could be sure of privacy and quiet; and he remained pretty much of a puzzle to his shipmates.

"I popped in me head to say 'how do,' and to tell him he was a good feller to get me out o' that blazin' galley," grumbled the doctor one dogwatch when weather had settled in fine. "What d'ye think he done? Grins at me with all his teeth showin' like a blessed shark. I don't believe he done that to save me at all."

And aft, the skipper smiled thoughtfully when the mate was as puzzled as the doctor. The skipper had seen that little bit of yellow newspaper. He had learned much about Toby Small; had got a new viewpoint on some of his queer ways.

"He's been shy of men ever since he had to go to sea again, because they must have worried him over those queer pets," the Old Man said. "You might imagine the old chap would not want to keep on answering idle questions all his life, with such a story behind him as that newspaper set out. We'll change that. I'm going to tell the ship's agent about it, and between us we'll make it up to Toby."

Making it up to Toby Small appeared to be easy after all. The agent, and the underwriters' representative, and the Old Man and the chief mate simply agreed together to meet at a snug little dinner party, at which Toby Small would be, quietly and with due privacy, presented with a suitable recognition, and perhaps a few words expressive of his fellow man's opinion of him.

It was all arranged. His shipmates envied him, as he entered his berth after being called aft to meet the shore gentlemen and hear what was proposed. All hands watched the Old Man go ashore with the ship's agent to hurry through business before the great moment. They saw the chief mate go ashore at five o'clock, and then Toby Small trotted into the galley for shaving water, grinning his toothsome grin. He was to appear at six o'clock at a hotel easy to find.

He dressed, in weirdly creased garments long unused. He trotted over the gangway, still grinning rather sheepishly. Men waved to him from the rails, saw him reach the street, and stop at the car tracks. They saw the car come in sight, stop, and go on: the next moment they saw Toby Small come trotting back to the old *Lorna*, to tear off his clothes as he ran and slam shut his door behind him.

"There! Wot did I tell yer? Scared stiff o' cars, that's why he don't go ashore!" exclaimed a seaman who had expressed something of the sort before. "Ain't got no guts."

"Plain batty, that's all I can say," grumbled another, who felt cheated because he would not be able to ask Sails all about the swell feed he had 'long o' the big bugs.

Toby lighted his lamp as evening drew in.

"*Ting-tang, ting-tang!*"

A boy struck four bells on the poop. Toby Small untied the string from his little feed bag and with fingers all eager for his nightly task filled the feed pans of the two cages, sighing peacefully to himself while two pink-eyed rats squeaked greedily, and a dilapidated old canary tried to flap its wings like a free wild eagle, and cheeped since it could no longer sing.

"You needn't make sich a row, Dicky, ner you neither," Toby muttered, grinning from bird to rats. "You knowed blessed well I couldn't let nobody interfere with yer supper time. They may know how to make a fuss of a feller as don't want it, but they ain't no bird fanciers, and what do they know about rats?"

VANISHED ANNUITIES

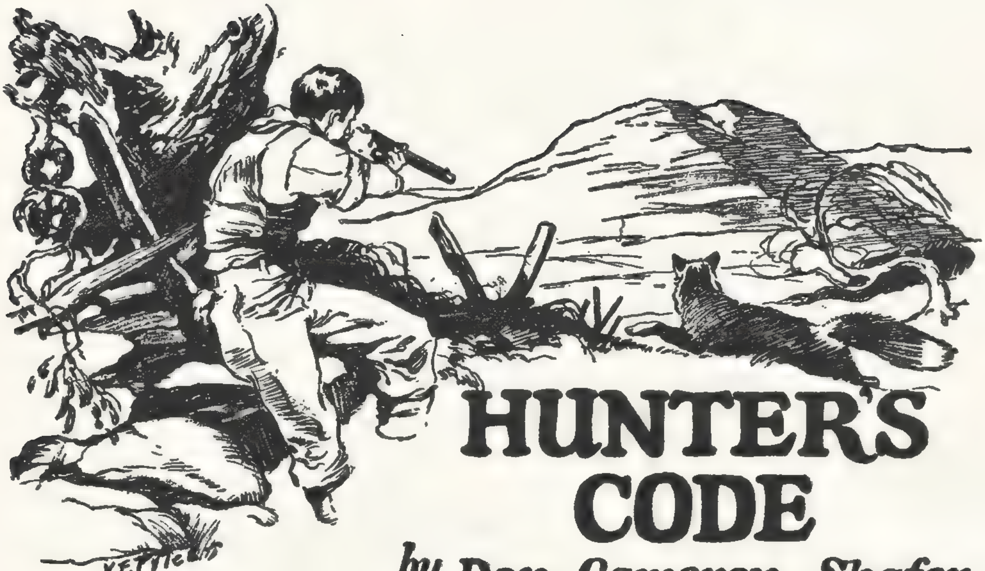
by Faunce Rochester

FOR a score of years, beginning 1850, the various Indian tribes along the Missouri River received not more than half the annuities the government endeavored to send to them. With the transferring of Indian affairs from the military authorities to the hands of agents, the spoils system became the vogue. The Indians believed their Great White Father in Washington had lied to them and cheated them. Stupendous frauds and outrages were commonly practised by some agents. Those agents who desired to be honest were compelled to take the annuity goods up river in American Fur Company boats. Having no warehouses, they were forced to store their goods with those of the traders. This mixing up of commercial goods and annuity goods always left the latter sadly depleted, and what had been started up the river as gift was received by the Indian only after he had paid for it with valuable furs.

The report of the Northwestern Treaty Commission to the Sioux of the Upper Missouri, 1866, significantly states: "Deliveries of goods should be witnessed by some Federal officer who should certify *that he saw the delivery*." Two years earlier General Alfred Sully reported, "This system of issuing annuity goods is one grand humbug."

While the treaty-annuity agency system made treaties that were not carried out; granted annuities which were not delivered; established a control that was too frequently vitiated by humbug and barefaced fraud, the steamboats became of prime importance to the river tribes. With the buffalo on the road to extermination the steamboats brought supplies. Grown to be dependent upon traders, the boats brought traders. Then the Indians were retired to reservations and the railroads drove the steamboats from the river as completely as the white man killed off and drove away the buffalo.

One agent in the Sioux country, whose salary was about $1200 a year, retired after three years with a large fortune. Questioned how he saved so much out of a hundred dollars a month he said he "had to be economical."



HUNTER'S CODE

by Don Cameron Shafer

NOW the laws of the hunt are written in no law book. Indeed, they are older than the oldest book. Down through the ages they have come, by word of mouth, from tribe to tribe, from people to people, since that distant long ago when the first hunters harried the wild auroch bulls with their great wolf-dogs and slew them with their flints. And one unwritten law of the chase decrees that a man's hound dog may run a deer, or any wild creature whatsoever; and if another man kills this game ahead of the dog half the meat and half the value of the hide shall belong to each.

Jeff Keyser's black-and-tan hound dog "Tobie," with loud exultant bugle-notes and the wisdom of many a long trail, jumped a red dog fox from its warm bed against the rocky steep of Pelham Wood and coursed it swiftly up the western ridge toward Stony Mountain. There the hard-pressed fox doubled in a brush-grown "slashin" and cut back along the eastern slope, leaving the protective cover of the damp forest to take advantage of dryer ground in the open which will not hold foot scent so long. But the old hound was pushing the fox so fast the fleeing animal thought best to try one more trick in order to gain a little breathing space before it crossed over the ridge on a favorite runway for the long race to rougher country westward. Beside this established fox runway waited old Jeff in a convenient fence corner, well out of sight, a loaded gun in his hands. The cold west wind of the heights whipped him, pinched his leathery old ears beneath the scraggly gray hair, reddened his cheekbones beneath a grizzly beard, beating the threadbare garments close about his thin shanks while he crouched there waiting. But, despite the cold, Jeff thrilled to the voice of the hound. He was willing to endure much more than this for the red skin of a fox in these days of high priced fur.

Up the tilted meadows reaching for the sky, across a plowed field, continued the chase until the west wind carried to the keen nose of the harried fox the strong odor of sheep. Straightway into this acrid scent-stream the fox turned to mask and disguise that tell-tale invisible column of fox-scent stretching away behind him and down which old Tobie raced, head high, waking the mountain echoes with loud full-tongued baying. Tobie was not trying to catch this fox—he had never caught a fox and never expected to. But he knew that somewhere on the heights his master waited and now he called to him in eager voice that the game was doubling back toward the gun.

The fox ran swiftly down a stone wall to where the sheep were quietly feeding in the stubble and leaped well out into their crowded midst. The sudden appearance of this red, dog-like animal, leaping down among them, stampeded the easily frightened sheep, sent them blatting and pounding across the field, with the fox weaving in and out among their flying black feet. The sole cunning purpose of the fox was to disguise and lose its own scent among the stronger odors of the sheep, but this strategy only caused the stupid beasts to run the faster, making a great to-do in the upper pasture.

Toni DeMarco, one of many foreigners who recently have purchased farms here since the near-by industrial cities have bled white our valley of its man power, had heard a great deal about sheep being killed by dogs. He witnessed his own sheep racing madly across the fields; he saw a dog-like animal running among them, and a larger dog coming noisily down the slope. So he grabbed his gun and ran toward the pasture. A ravine screened him, a knoll hid him from sight, and then some bushes along the fence, until he was very near the sheep now thundering directly toward him. At this time the sly old fox concluded that his own faint scent trail was completely hidden by the pungent odor of sheep and jumped back upon the stone wall to run its length before hurrying away over the hill. But, with the dull boom of Toni's shotgun the fox stumbled in its stride, staggered on, struggling to maintain its feet and then slid slowly off the wall to the ground.

From his cold hiding place in the fence corner far up the ridge Jeff Keyser looked down and saw all this. He saw the red dot of animated wild life leap among the toy sheep and grinned to himself. Old Tobie was wise to such tricks! Jeff knew that no fox, nor his own dog, would harm those sheep, even as he knew that the tired fox soon would come racing back up the wall to follow the age-old runway within range of his gun. He slipped his gnarled right hand from its worn mitten and thumbed back the hammers of the old double gun, looking to make sure the bright caps were in place on the nipples. But even as he laid the gun on top of the fence, so that the approaching fox might not see the slightest movement to alarm him, Jeff heard the loud roar of a gun below. He looked down just in time to see the fox roll off the stone wall with the stout figure of Toni running forward, gun in hand. With surprizing agility for one of his age, Jeff climbed over the fence and hurried down the slope.

"What'd you shoot that fox fer?" demanded Jeff as he ran up.

"Well, why not, eh?" grinned Toni insolently, glad to know that he had killed a valuable fox instead of a cur dog. "Hee's skeen worth maybe fifteen dollar."

"I started that fox," protested Jeff.

"Well, maybe so," as he took the spent cartridge from his gun and flicked it towards Jeff. "What 'bout it?"

"An' my dog was runnin' him!"

"On my farm," retorted Toni.

Toni DeMarco would give up no fifteen dollars, or fifteen cents, to any man without a struggle. A stalwart, heavy set young Italian, quick-tempered and belligerent, he entertained no idea whatsoever of surrendering any portion of his lucky kill. And Jeff Keyser was an old man, a mountain man more or less despised by valley folk, gaunt and gnarled, scraggly beard on bony face gray with the years. He stood for his rights but he could no longer fight for them. He picked up the empty shell that had robbed him of his fox, turning it in shaking fingers as he faced this insolent stranger of another race.

"Well, half this kill belongs t' me anyway," said he.

"I geeve you the meat!" laughed Toni.

"But half th' value of that fox skin belongs to me, I tell ye!"

"Oh, eet do, eh? Suppose you tell me what for."

"Because my dog was runnin' it, that's why," answered Jeff. "It's th' law of th' hunt."

"Funny I never hear 'bout this hunt law."

"It's th' law jest th' same—half that pelt belongs to me an' you can give or take—"

"I take—the whole business! And you try for to get your half!" warned Toni angrily. "What you fellers ever give me, eh, but a pain in the neck? This fox be one wild animal, and the game law say I can keel him. So I shoot heem and pretty soon I skeen heem and sell him skeen for fifteen dollar. When you get your half of that you buy me nice Christmas present, what?"

"It's th' law of th' hunt that—" began Jeff helplessly.

"I no see that in the game law," finished

Toni as he picked up the fox by the brush. "You go chase yourself off my farm!"

Jeff, feeling justly that he was being robbed, exploded in harsh words.

"You just wait, you ——," he shouted after Toni, "I'll make you settle some day!"

THE code of the hunt was established around the first campfires when man lived by the chase alone. The headmen of those first nomad hunters enacted these rules and regulations so there would be no further disputes in the field over the rights of game. Through countless generations of hunters these laws have prevailed, until wherever men live by the gun they rule the hunt to this very day. That remnant of a dying race of hunters, represented by a few old men in our mountains, obey these laws though they may disregard many others.

Hide hunters, market hunters, meat hunters, they have outlived the game they hunted. Out of the East they came, the forebears of these hunters, more than a hundred years ago, following the vanishing game westward, axes in their belts, rifles on their shoulders. Clad in wild leather, their eyes on the blue mountains ahead, they built their little cabins far back in the hidden valleys near the game. Always these hunters come up out of nowhere, when there is an abundance of game—always they go when the game goes. For nature rules that the killers too must die when there is nothing more to kill.

The game law reads that the red deer may be hunted but ten days each fall. But ten days, when once they were pursued the year around and hide hunters slew them by hundreds in their winter "yards" for their skins alone! The first day of the open season Matt Girty fired at a running buck and seriously wounded the animal. Matt took the trail at a dog-trot, well knowing by the blood marks on either side that the wounded beast would go but a little way. Scarce half a mile and he heard ahead of him the loud *whoom* of a shotgun.

"Somebody's stopped him," said Matt to himself.

He was glad of this, for Matt was an old man, and this would save him a long climb up the mountain. So he hurried on up the trail to claim the kill. At the foot of a shadowy ravine he came upon Toni DeMarco and a strange countryman of his standing over the dead body of the buck.

"That's my deer," called Matt as he hurried up.

"Your deer?" laughed Toni. "Why, I just shoot heem myself but now!"

To prove it he broke his double-barreled shotgun and tossed an empty shell into Matt's face. The old hunter threw up a hand and caught this shell as he explained:

"I put a ball through that buck half a mile back," said he. "You must have heard me shoot."

"I hear plenty shoot all day," answered Toni. "Why you no keel this buck if you shoot heem, eh?"

"He was hard hit," explained Matt," a bit too far back as you can see, but he'd a died in a few minutes."

"Plenty live when he come here," appealing to his companion, "wasn't he?"

"He sure was," nodded the other.

"You see," angrily, "I keel heem and you bet hee's my meat."

"No," corrected Matt. "That 's my deer. I shot it first, mortally, and it's th' law of th' hunt that—"

"Ha, ha, ha," laughed Toni insolently. "I know nothin' 'bout this law of the hunt."

"I'm tellin' ye," continued Matt doggedly. "It's th' law that a mortally wounded beast belongs t' th' man that wounded it, regardless of who finally kills it."

"Oh, it do, eh?" angrily. "I pay me no attention to such fool things. I got all I can do to keep track of the laws in the book. This deer now, I shoot heem, and I take heem—what you goin' to do about that, eh?"

He stepped closer to the old man, challenging him, a bit of bravo, before his companion, his dark, wide face thrust eagerly forward with the jaw muscles working.

"I aim t' stop you if you try it," warned Matt.

The advantages of the situation lay all with Toni—he had youth and strength and an armed companion with him. So the threat in Matt Girty's voice roused the excitable Mediterranean blood in him to a sudden frenzy of rage.

"You just try for to stop me taking that deer!" he threatened, arms waving, talking so fast it was difficult to follow him. "Try it once, you dare!"

Matt was not frightened by all this. If it came to shooting, two could play at that game, but he could see that Toni was ripe for any mischief and a dead buck wasn't worth so much promise of trouble.

"All right," said Matt, "you keep it, but let me tell you somethin': No furriner can take a buck away from me an' not pay for it sometime!"

Matt spat in disgust, glaring a challenge at the two, then turned without another word and went shambling away through the painted forest to hunt up another deer.

As a matter of fact Toni knew he had no claim to this deer whatsoever; it was dying on its feet, actually falling when he shot.

"Those old he-goats of the mountains, I bluff them every time," laughed Toni in his own mellow tongue. "Where they get those laws of the hunt is more than any one knows. but they make me lots of laughter.

JARED RIVENBARK'S "Trailer," casting in a wide circle over Windy Ridge, started a huge bay lynx from the blue spruce swamp where the white hares pass like gray ghosts in the thick shadows and harried it down to the valley below. This huge cat had no fear of the dog and it scorned the safety of the trees because well it knew that the loud voice of its pursuer would soon bring Jared with his gun. Twice it stopped with blazing eyes and ready claws to fight the hound but each time Trailer kept at a safe distance, his loud "*oowahh oowahh!*" changing quickly from a ringing trail-call to the higher and faster notes of game at bay. So the rufus red cat, on its long, heavy and powerful legs, raced away again, cutting down across the upland pasture above Toni DeMarco's barn just after daylight, taking this shorter way to the rocky ridges and narrow ledges of Stony Mountain, in black silhouette against the southern sky, where no dog could follow it.

Toni heard the hound and saw the big cat galloping down a dry stream-bed toward the lower meadows. He thought it another and larger fox and ran out with his gun, remembering how easily he had made fifteen dollars this same way before. But the bay lynx is even more cunning than any fox. The big cat saw Toni running from the barn and doubled back along a brush fence well out of range. When the dog came flying down the hot scent trail Toni was angry because his long run was for nothing. He surmised that the mountain hunters were guarding the heights above him and he was determined that if he could not have the valuable skin they should not have it either. So he tried to stop the dog. He attempted to head it off and catch it but the hound was too fast for him. Toni whistled and yelled and attempted to frighten it away from the trail, but the dog was insensible to anything else but the fascinating scent of its game. Finally, in desperation, with the dog well past him and swinging hard up the hill, Toni fired his gun. Perhaps he only meant to sting the dog, to prick it a bit with the spent shot, but the animal was nearer than he thought.

With the crack of the gun the dog whirled and bit its right flank, yelping shrilly. It rolled over and over on the ground, then jumped up, still yelping, and raced homeward.

"There," said Toni as he reloaded his gun, "maybe that teach you not to run heem fox so fast next time!"

The roar of the gun and the loud yelping of the injured dog attracted the attention of two boys out to inspect their skunk traps. Their young eyes were sharp and, though all this had taken place quite a way below, they saw Toni with his gun and recognized him; they witnessed the injured dog streaking it across the fields and knew it for Jared's Trailer.

Jared's dog did not die, but it was unable to hunt any more that fall. Jared, without the services of his dog, suffered what was to him a serious loss. He shot no foxes, nor did he see anything more of the big lynx. And Jared wasn't long finding out who had injured his dog. The boys made no secret of it. So the next time he saw Toni he accused him of the dastardly act.

"You bet," grinned Toni. "I shoot heem—he all the time after my sheeps."

"That's a lie," said Jared. "My dog 's never off'n his chain except when he's runnin' game."

"He chase my sheeps," stubbornly, "and I shoot heem."

"Your sheep weren't even out that day."

"That long time ago," grinned Toni, "and you got to prove it, eh?"

"You hadn't no right t' harm my dog—"

"He was on my farm, wasn't he?"

"It makes no difference where he was. A man's hound dog in pursuit of game can run where th' game takes it, an' no one has any right t' injure it in any way."

"More hunt law!" sneered Toni. "You fellows all time make me seek with your hunt laws."

"It's th' law," maintained Jared.

"Well, what you going do about it, eh?"

"I ain't a-goin' t' forget it," promised old Jared. "An' some day you'll have cause to regret you hurt that dog!"

WHEN Toni counted his sheep on Friday there were but twenty-nine instead of the usual thirty. On Monday there were but twenty-eight and the next morning another was missing.

"Those malicious old brigands—those hungry mountain banditti," he screamed to his wife and family. "They have robbed me of my sheep that they may eat!"

Toni had not forgotten the solemn, if profane promises of three old men to even up accounts against him. Of course they must have taken his sheep! Straightway he hurried to the village and laid the case before the sheriff. Dirck Ackerman was a sensible man and a good official. No one understood better this vanishing race of hunters who, in ever diminishing numbers, survive the game in our mountains.

"I don't believe they took your sheep," said Dirck. "Game 's gettin' pretty scarce but they'd have to be mighty hungry to steal."

"They take 'em," affirmed Toni. "They try for to get even with me."

"When you disregarded their laws of the hunt," explained Dirck, "you thought it a good joke."

"But stealing my sheeps," shouted Toni, "that is robbery!"

"Of another kind," said Dirck.

Toni got no satisfaction, no sympathy and no service out of Dirck.

"I'll come up to your place this afternoon," promised Dirck, "and take a look for your sheep."

"I make you go up there in those mountain and find my sheep!" answered Toni as he dashed out of the court-house.

He went, determined and angry, to the home of a pettifogging lawyer who made a thin living by just such business. Toni had money and this lawyer had not, so they went to the justice of the peace and warrants were sworn out to search the cabins of Matt Girty and Jeff Keyser and Jared Rivenbark. With these warrants in his hand, the sheriff could do no less than conduct the search.

"You won't find your sheep there," said he petulantly, "but I'll go."

"I bet you," grinned Toni, "they got 'em!"

They drove up into the hills in Dirck's little car, shortly before noon, Toni and his lawyer friend in the rear seat; stopping first at Matt Girty's cabin. Matt was both suspicious and angry when he saw them there, because they had appeared so suddenly, while he was down at the spring after a bucket of water, and thus cut him off from the cabin. Now he had to assume a welcome and a calm demeanor he certainly did not feel.

"Toni here has lost some sheep," began Dirck.

"Three sheeps," added Toni.

"Well, I ain't got 'em," answered Matt gruffly. "An' I ain't cryin' none over his loss neither."

"I hear you fellows have had quite a lot of trouble with this Toni of late."

"He's made some trouble," admitted Matt, "an' first chance we aim to pay him back, but not in mutton."

"They've sworn out a warrant to search your cabin."

Dirck alone saw the aged figure of Matt stiffen, saw the dark tan of his wrinkled face and neck deepen beneath the grisly beard.

"Now Dirck," pleaded Matt. "I've never lied to you an' I say agin none o' us have bothered that dago's sheep."

The word "dago" sent Toni jumping up and down with wrath.

"I demand search hees house," he screamed. "He got my sheeps!"

"Ain't no furriner goin' t' search this cabin," warned Matt as he stepped back before the door and seized upon an ax that stood hard by.

"Easy, Matt," warned Dirck, "if you ain't got his sheep it's all right, and no harm done, but they've sworn out search warrants and I've got to do it, if only to satisfy them that they're wrong."

"He ees guilty," cried Toni. "He don't want us to look, eh?"

Though Matt Girty would have defended his cabin with his life against any number of foreigners, he stepped back to let Dirck pass. They went inside, into a clean but poorly furnished room, where Matt's dinner was cooking in an iron pot on an old fashioned stove.

As Dirck had promised, they found not so much as a bit of wool.

"No sign of your sheep in here," said Dirck.

"Yes, yes," cried Toni. "I smell my sheeps cooking on the stove!"

"I guess not," said Dirck.

But Toni stepped to the kettle and snatched off the cover.

"Mutton," he cried gleefully, "my sheeps."

The lawyer man sniffed and demanded the kettle and its contents as evidence of the theft.

"That ain't his mutton," protested Matt.

"Then you prove where you got it," said the lawyer.

Matt did not answer—he could not answer. He looked at Dirck anxiously.

"There's no other way," said Dirck.

"Its been pretty hard t' live this fall," said Matt.

He stood there glowering darkly, thinking hard, gritting his worn teeth. But rather than let this insolent dago get the best of him Matt would do most anything. And stealing sheep, unless he could explain the meat in the pot, was a mighty serious offense.

"All right," with an effort, "I'll show you where I got that meat."

Matt took a shovel from the lean-to shed and led the way out behind the small barn. There he began to dig and soon uncovered the skin and entrails of a newly killed deer.

"Thar," he cried, with a bitter oath, glaring at Toni. "Thar's th' hide offen my meat—does that look like a sheepskin?"

"I knew," nodded Dirck. "But it would be mighty difficult for a jury to distinguish the difference between venison and mutton."

"Ho-ho!" chortled Toni, disappointed, but pleased to find Matt guilty of something. "A deer out of season—maybe you won't settle!"

Matt Girty knew that this was a confession of broken game laws, the open season for deer having been closed for ten days. But, caught and cornered, he had to take his choice of standing trial for stealing sheep or confessing to killing a deer out of season. One meant a jail sentence and the other but a fine.

"Get what fun ye can out of it," growled Matt, "you'll have trouble enough yourself some day!"

"You ride along down to town with me," said Dirck, "and we'll get Mert Morrow and settle this thing up."

Toni did not find his sheep in the mountain cabins as he expected but he returned home well satisfied with his day. Matt Girty had been fined twenty-five dollars for killing a deer out of season and Dirck Ackerman had loaned the old man eleven dollars to make up the required sum.

THOUGH still mourning the loss of his sheep, Toni returned home in a more cheerful mood than when he left that morning.

"They take my sheep and hide them," he muttered, "but you bet I make them pay!"

He had been lucky to catch Matt as he did and good fortune still rained down upon him as his stout wife met him at the door with a barrage of Sicilian words.

"Thy sheep have come back," she shrilled. "Antonio, the smallest, has found them, all three, under the barn."

"My day is full," sighed Toni with relief.

And it was as she said. The three sheep, newly confined in the barn, had jumped into an old horse manger, as sheep will, and the bottom boards having rotted away they tumbled through, one after the other, into the dark hole beneath the barn floor. The other sheep made so much noise above that the missing three were not heard and it remained for the adventurous Antonio, the smallest, to discover their yellow eyes gleaming through a hole in the outside wall.

"Well, well," exulted Toni, "this is as it should be!"

But he never told any one that the sheep had been found, which would have been to confess that he was a hasty fool.

EVERY fall the new State road brings an army of hunters into our mountains. They make it harder for these old men to live by the gun. Even when there is nothing more to hunt within the law than a few cottontail rabbits these city hunters come with their fancy outdoor clothing and their high-power guns. The lust to kill is strong upon them and many will risk a shot at a pheasant or a grouse, or even a deer, when the law says they shall not. The forests are large and thick with shadows, and though Mert Morrow is a good man for the position one game warden can not be everywhere.

Toni DeMarco had many friends and relatives in the near-by cities. He posed as a mighty hunter himself, having already shot a fox and a big deer besides much smaller game. He invited these friends out to hunt with him. Almost every week-end his house was filled with his countrymen. Now in their own land across the sea there is no game to shoot, except on the carefully guarded estates of the rich, so if they hunt at all they must content themselves with migrating larks, warblers and such small birds. So it was hard for Toni's friends and relatives to resist shooting at the flocks of Southbound robins feeding on the blue cedar berries, at the big woodpeckers and the mourning doves. Always they protested when caught that they were but poor ignorant foreigners and did not know that this was against the law.

But Bert Morrow insisted that a man intelligent enough to be trusted with a gun ought to know enough to look up the game laws before starting out to hunt. That Justice Holmes agreed with him is attested by the stiff fines he meted out to these offenders when Mert brought them in.

Three times Mert caught Toni's guests with dead songbirds in their game bags. Once Toni himself was caught with a hen pheasant in his coat.

"My coz he keel it by mistake," argued Toni, "and I think maybe take the meat home so it won't waste."

"That mistake will cost your cousin twenty-five dollars," said the justice, "and your thrifty dinner will come to just twenty-five more!"

"For why?" demanded Toni. "I no keel it."

Though parting with so much money was a terrible ordeal for one so thrifty, accompanied by tears and threats, Toni paid. The fact that his cousin had no money and Toni had to pay this also was doubly hard.

ON A Saturday afternoon, when city hunters are hurrying into the country for the week-end, Mert Morrow told his wife that he was going up Acker Hollow way and would be home about dark. He went alone, unaccompanied even by a dog, armed with a heavy revolver worn openly at his belt. When the early dark of late November settled in the valley like a blue mist Mert had not returned. By nine o'clock, and no word of him, his wife was worried and telephoned to the village. When he had not come home by fair daylight the next morning the entire countryside was alarmed. Searching parties were hastily organized, telephones buzzed; but search as they would they found no trace of the missing man.

"Mert's dead," said Dirck sadly. "If he was alive he'd be home by now. He had his gun, and even if disabled, he knows that three shots will bring help anywhere in these hills."

"Maybe he fell and is unconscious," suggested a deputy.

"Then they ought to find him," answered Dirck. "Mert didn't leave home until three o'clock so he couldn't have gone more'n three or four mile."

A stroke, heart failure, a bad fall might account for Mert's continued absence, or even his death, but no one could explain why his body could not be found.

Then some one remembered that they had seen Mert talking with Jared Rivenbark at the edge of Pelham wood that same afternoon. Instantly word flashed through the countryside that Mert had been killed by these mountain men. All knew that they habitually broke the game laws, although it was hard to catch them at it, and that they would not submit tamely to arrest for what they believed was within their rights.

A posse of indignant citizens went up there, without the knowledge of the sheriff or even authority for the act, and brought them all down to the court-house for examination—a few old men in worn leather boots and ragged homespun; a few withered old women in calico. But they learned no more than that Jared was the last to talk with Mert. The threatening crowd in the court-room, the grim shadow of the incomprehensible law, the knowledge that they were suspected, actually accused, frightened these old people. If they had any opinions or suggestions they did not voice them. When it was apparent that there was no evidence to hold them they hurried back to the security of their cabins and stayed indoors. This untoward act robbed the hunt of the very men who could have done the most to find Mert.

By the third day the search was abandoned by every one except the sheriff. The idly curious and the indignant friends of Mert, unused to mountain climbing and by now physically exhausted, contented themselves with shopworn theories in the village stores or wholly imaginative explanations. Nearly all believed that these old men of the mountains could explain this mystery if they were made to talk.

"Some husky police captain from the city and the third degree," affirmed John Beller, "and we'd soon get to the bottom of this."

To loosen tongues, if there were any to loosen, to stimulate continued interest in the search, as well as to show their appreciation for Mert's past services, the Town Board met and voted a reward of five hundred dollars for any information leading to a solution of the mystery. The local gun club voted two hundred and fifty dollars more.

ON THE third empty day the sheriff drove his little car up the rough mountain road to Matt Girty's cabin. Matt was there, and Jared, with old Jeff and Storm Fullerton. They were a bit nervous and frightened when they heard the car coming up the steep but as soon as they saw that it was the sheriff and he alone, they greeted him cordially.

"Howdy, Dirck," called Matt.

Matt was their natural leader and spokesman, so the rest merely nodded.

"Hello, boys," answered Dirck, stopping in the little dooryard.

"You ain't goin' t' drag us all down thar ag'in, be ye?" asked Matt anxiously.

"No," smiled Dirck kindly enough, "that wasn't my doin's. They sort a went off half cocked, bein' so wrought up about Mert. I just though I'd run up here today and see if you fellows wouldn't help out a bit."

"Any way we kin, Dirck," answered Matt, much relieved.

"I believe you boys can find Mert."

Dirck was watching them closely, all four, though he was quite sure they knew nothing about Mert, but the sentence neither surprised nor alarmed them. They did not even speak, waiting patiently for Dirck to explain.

"Mert's dead," went on Dirck.

They nodded solemnly that it was so they believed.

"He was gone but a little while and he fired no signal shots."

"We heered none," said Matt.

"He was killed and his body hidden away within a few miles of his own home."

They nodded again, all four, evidencing that they too had given the problem some similar thought.

"We've got to find him," added Dirck.

"Th' hull countryside's been scoured," said Matt.

"Those searching parties, yelling their way through the woods, did more harm than good," answered Dirck. "If they found anything it would be an accident. There's been no wind and no rain. You men know these mountains and these forests as no one else could know them. You've been trailers and trackers all your lives, and your fathers before you. I want you to help me find Mert."

"Some folks think as how we did it," said Matt.

"I don't," answered Dirck.

"An' if we do find Mert they'll say we knew it all th' while an' probably make us stand trial."

"No they won't," promised Dirck.

"I dunno as we want t' get mixed up in this."

"We've got to find him; we've got to know, and if there is a guilty one he must be made to pay the price. We owe this to Mert, and to the community, and there's seven hundred dollars' reward."

"Seven hundred dollars," repeated Matt.

Fortune itself to these poor, undernourished old men, trying to live by the gun in an almost gameless country. They looked, one to another, eagerly.

"We'll find him," agreed Matt, "if any man can."

"GET down, Dirck," bade Matt, "an' sit a while. Th' poorest way t' find anything is t' go runnin' after it without a bit o' thought."

"That's so," agreed Dirck, stepping down to sit on the chopping block.

"Half in knowin' where t' look."

"Truth to that, Matt."

Matt turned to his companions.

"Did any one o' you see or hear anything unusual th' day Mert disappeared?"

"Several gangs o' city hunters out," said Storm.

"I heered a lot o' shootin' around four o'clock that day," said Jared. "It seemed t' be down in th' cedar woods. An' it struck me at th' time that there ain't game enough in these hull mountains any more to warrant so much shootin'. Sounded fer a few minutes like th' pigeons had come back to feed on th' beech mast."

"But those city fellers are alwus shootin'," argued Jeff. "Firin' at tin cans, tossin' up hats, anything, jest as though powder an' shot didn't cost anythin'."

But they all agreed that such a fusillade of shots, when only rabbits can be hunted and few of them to be found, would be sure to attract the warden. And if Mert had gone up into the thick cedar forest, which seemed likely, there was the logical place to start the search.

Matt Girty, clever as any savage on the trail, led the hunt. There in the deep shadows of the green cedars the five of them began a systematic inspection of the ground. Here was no thick carpet of dead leaves to impede the search. The taller cedars spread their thick green branches between earth and sky and dimmed the light of day at their feet. Heavy clumps of dense young growth, scattered here and there through the wood, offered many hiding places.

They found quite a few empty shotgun shells on the ground—pink ones, yellow ones, red and black shells—evidencing that here had been some recent heavy shooting. After a bit Jared found three small dull-red feathers hanging on a cedar twig.

"Robin feathers," said Jared displaying his find.

"A party of hunters was here shooting at the fall flocked robins as they came in to feed on the cedar berries," agreed Dirck.

"Furriners," said Matt. "An' three or four of them, judgin' by th' boot marks an' th' different-colored empty shells."

They soon found other robin feathers and a bit of blood here and there where the bodies of the dead birds had tumbled down out of the trees.

"They were in here shooting robins," reasoned Dirck, "and Mert heard the shots and came up here. He must have caught them at it red-handed, as he could work up pretty close in this cover. And knowin' the large amount of fines in store for them, the lawbreakers turned on Mert and done him to death."

This seemed a reasonable background for the search and, if this surmise was correct, they now knew where to look.

"If Mert was killed in these woods, it wouldn't be so easy t' hide th' body," said Matt. "Th' ground 's dry an' it would be hard t' dig a hole large enough t' hide a man without pick an' shovel."

"Harder yet to disguise fresh dug dirt in this yellow soil," agreed Dirck.

"An' yet they'd have t' dispose o' th' body somehow."

Near the edge of the cedars, where the hardwoods began, Jeff Keyser found the blackened circle of a recent fire.

"Some one dropped a match or a cigaret," said Dirck, "there's no deep ashes or charred stick ends of a camp fire."

"Maybe," grinned Jeff, "but I've made jest such fires myself when I wanted to hide somethin' hard to clean up!"

But the earth had not been disturbed beneath the burned and charred leaves. The five woodsmen were now on their hands and knees going over every inch of the ground. It was Jared who found the empty shotgun shell.

"Woods are full of empty shells," said Dirck.

"But this one 's of a larger size, a ten gauge, an' it wus hid under a flat stone," said Jared. "Th' man who killed Mert stood right here an' fired this shell—that's why he hid it. They tried t' destroy or hide every scrap o' evidence. Mert dropped over there where th' fire wus, an' they built it t' destroy th' blood marks."

Matt substantiated this when he pointed out a few shot marks on the gray bole of a beech tree where some of the charge had missed Mert's body.

"Fired at close range, probably from behind," explained Matt, "breast-high an' Mert never had a chance. You'll find th' body hard by, fer Mert wus a heavy man an' they wouldn't risk carryin' him far in daylight."

This was obvious, but they could find no place where a man's body might be hidden, nor any indication of recent digging. Then Jared noted where many stones had been taken from the dry stream-bed of a near-by water course. The mark of these stones showed distinctly there in the dry sand and gravel, when one looked closely, but the stones were missing. It was but a few minutes work to locate them, tossed in a very natural and unnoticeable manner against and under the overhanging embankment of the stream-bed where high water had undermined and cut in when the creek was in flood.

"Mert's body 's under thar," said Matt.

"Jest one little rain an' it would never have been found."

When the stones had been removed and a large amount of dirt and gravel dug away, for the bank had been broken down over the stones, the body of Mert was found.

"We've got to know who did this," said Dirck sadly.

IT IS the rule that in such cases the coroner must view the body before it can be moved. So Dirck and Matt hurried away to telephone to the authorities. They left the others behind to watch and guard the place.

"We'll go over to Toni's house," said Dirck, "he's got a phone."

Matt looked at Dirck, questioning, but did not speak. It was shorter, he knew, down through the woods to Rob Beeker's house.

On their way to the DeMarco farmhouse across the fields they came upon Toni hard at work with his ax upon a felled tree along the pasture fence above his place.

"Hello, what you want?" demanded Toni, surlily enough, when he looked up and saw the two men before him.

"Want t' pay you what I owe you," chuckled Matt.

"Huh," snorted Toni, "you owe me nothin' but grudge."

"Pay that then!"

"Want to use your telephone," explained Dirck to prevent any quarrel between these two men.

"Oh," grinned Toni, his dark face lightening up with a smile. "Course; down to the house, my woman she show you."

"We've just found Mert's body," said Dirck, "and want to call up the coroner."

"You find heem?" in surprize. "Where?"

"Pretty nigh where he wus killed," said Matt.

"Oh, yes, sure!" grinned Toni. "An' now all you gotta do is find out who keel heem, eh?"

"Har-har-har," chuckled Matt. "I know who killed Mert!"

Dirck looked at Matt in a way to warn the old man to go slowly, as Toni began to shout.

"Course you do—you keel heem," he cried angrily. "You keel that man so you don't have to pay more game law fines!"

"That's th' very reason he wus killed," said Matt.

"The man who owns the gun that fired this shell probably killed Mert," explained Dirck to calm Toni, taking the empty cartridge from his coat pocket.

"An' here 's th' twin brother t' that shell," said Matt as he picked up an exploded shotgun cartridge from the ground at his feet. "Same scratches on th' brass base, same crooked firin'- pin," handing it to Dirck. "An' that's th' very shell this dago fired at Jeff Keyser's dog!"

"You lie!" screamed Toni. "You dropped that shell there—you got grudge against me. You—"

"An' here's th' ten-bore shell you fired at my buck deer an' threw in my face," went on Matt, taking a third empty shell out of his pocket. "An' Jeff Keyser's got another with th' same marks on it—th' very one you shot that fox with ahead o' his dog!"

"You keel that man!" cried Toni. "You keel heem and try for to lay it on me!"

"Toni," cautioned Dirck, "don't get excited. It is true these shells were all fired from the same gun, and one of them probably killed Mert Morrow. All you need to do is to go down to your house with us and prove that your ten-gauge couldn't have fired them."

"Me—I—"

In a sudden frenzy of insane rage, his dark eyes rolling, blue lips frothing, the half crazed and excitable Italian raised his ax swiftly and threw himself upon Matt Girty. As Matt leaped back a sharp blow from Dirck's hard fist laid Toni senseless on the ground.

"You've got th' varmint who killed Mert," said old Matt, "but it's th' law o' th' woods that the bounty must be divided among all those who helped t' hunt him down!"

LA RUE of the 88

A Five-Part Story
Part III

by Gordon Young

Author of “Pearl Hunger‘” “Days of ’49,” etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

BEFORE the railroad came to Perez, a little adobe village of the southwestern cattle country, old George La Rue bought a ranch sixty miles from town, which he called the Eighty-Eight. One day Monk Cunningham, the unscrupulous owner of the neighboring ranch called on the La Rues. Next day Mrs. La Rue left her husband and child and was never heard of again.

As young Larry La Rue, the son, grew up he became more and more worthless, and ran to worse and worse companions. His father stood drunkenness, lies, theft, even close association with Cunningham from his son; but when Larry ruined the innocent and beautiful daughter of old Hendryx; La Rue ordered his son from his door forever. Young Larry fled the country, and disappeared from sight.

Time passed. It was now twenty years from the time when La Rue first came to Perz. There was a railroad, and with it came numbers of people. Hotels grew up; stores, restaurants, dance halls. There were more ranchers than before. There was Jake Spencer, and the Hammarsmiths who hated each other. The Spencer outfit because things were said about old Jake's wife and young Cliff Hammarsmith while the Hammarsmith outfit returned the compliment. There were also two youngsters, Tom Walker and Blade Jones, who had a small ranch. They used Cunningham's water, and were universally hated by him and all his political friends in town. Of these politicians the chief was Jim Barley, a cripple who owned a dance hall and told the Mexican townspeople how to vote.

One day old George was reading a letter in Barley's café when a stranger stepped in.

La Rue looked up, startled, and fumbled for his gun. The stranger fired and killed La Rue.

“Anything to say, Gentlemen?” he asked. “Say it now. Boyd's my name, an' I'm ridin' out a here now. This here settles an ol' battle.”

“You fought fair,” they said and let him go. But they wondered who would get the ranch now. They had no idea where young La Rue was.

The letter in old George's hand was from his niece saying that she and her mother were on their way to visit him. Jim Barley was appointed administrator of the La Rue ranch.

A HORSEMAN rode into Perez and stopped at Pop Murdock's Santa Fé saloon. His face was bronzed and hard.

He looked at the reward signs on the wall, where, conspicuously, there stood a card which read:

WANTED
DEAD OR ALIVE
BUCK HARRISON

“Bourbon,” he said to Pop.

Said Pop to himself:

“Here's one bad hombre. Young, but he's learned.” Aloud he said—

“Who are you?”

“La Rue,” said the man. “Laurence La Rue.”

After some talk with Pop Murdock and a little affair with Slab Saunders, town bad-man and foreman of the Eighty-Eight under Barley, over a card game, La Rue informed Slab that he was no longer foreman, and backed up the statement with a gun.

Later, in the I.X.L. saloon, he made friends with a young puncher by the name of Red Clark and a girl called Nora. Hendryx, turning from the piano recognized him as La Rue, and Jim Barley was called in to talk things over.

Barley claimed that old George La Rue had left a will cutting young Larry off, and offered to destroy the will and give him ten thousand dollars for a bill of sale for the ranch. La Rue refused and Barley threatened him, promising to talk the matter over with Slab Saunders and see Larry later.

LATER in the I.X.L. saloon La Rue met old Jake Spencer. Spencer refused to believe this man to be La Rue, much to the surprize of honest Red Clark whom La Rue had hired as top hand for the Eighty-eight. Later Barley saw La Rue and tried to bully him into signing a bill of sale to the ranch by pretending that he had found a will leaving the Eighty-eight to old George's niece and sister who were now residing at the ranch. La Rue refused to believe the will story, and left Barley beaten and angry.

As he came from the interview the girl Nora looked strangely at him.

"I wonder if she knows that I'm Buck Harrison," he thought.

BUCK, Juan Hurtados a Mexican servant of his, and Red Clark rode out to the Eighty-eight ranch. They heard the Negro cook refuse to give food to Mrs. Allen, old George La Rue's sister and her daughter, Jane. He discovered that Saunders was trying to starve the women out.

"It's all right," he told them, "Saunders is fired."

But they seemed unwilling to accept him as a friend. That night Saunders' men returned to the bunkhouse and Buck, listening outside, overheard them say that they were rustling cattle from the Eighty-eight, and that they hoped to be able to scare La Rue off his own ranch.

Coolly he walked in and told them to get out. There was something about the man that frightened them into doing it.

"You can't have your blankets until you bring my cattle back," he said. "And you can't bring my cattle back without horses. Go into the corral and catch some."

But the horses were too wild to catch; and Windy Mills and Saunders' other men stayed out in the cold all night trying to catch horses. Buck and his two men sat in the bunkhouse with guns to prevent the men from returning.

Finally the expelled punchers lit a fire.

"Kick out that fire," shouted Buck. "D'ya think I want my corrals burnt up."

"It's cold," cried Windy.

"Run around. Jump up an' down. Keep warm thataway," said Buck.

Nothing more was shouted, but Buck could hear the men cursing as they scattered the fire with their boots.

V

IN THE dim cool dawn Buck knocked loudly on Mrs. Allen's door, which was now closed and barred.

"Yes? Yes? What is it?" she asked anxiously, starting up out of troubled sleep.

"Me, La Rue, m'am. Did I wake you all up?"

"What is it? What do you want?"

"It's an awful purtty mornin', an' I thought my cousin there that she would enjoy lookin' at the landscape some. Tell 'er to come an' look."

"Why—why I don't understand," said Mrs. Allen uneasily.

"If she don't like the scenery she don't have to look, but there's a powerful purtty picture out there in the hoss pasture!"

Jane herself spoke up, distrustful, but curious:

"What is it? What are you talking about!"

"I thought maybe you'd admire, miss," Buck called through the door, "for to see a sight the which ain't never been seen on many cow ranches. Windy Mills an' them other cow-stealers is out there in the hoss pasture on foot a usin' of awful language. I thought maybe you'd feel good for to see 'em!"

There was scrape and thump as the heavy bar was lifted. The door opened a little, and Jane, with hair touseled, and eyes still sleep-heavy, peered out.

She could see on a pasture hill side men straggling about, ropes in hand, and far below them was a flurry of dust where a bunch of horses raced away.

"Oh what's happened?" she asked incredulous and with delight.

"Miss, they're in much the same pair o' boots as you was wearin' yesterday. They want a-get off the ranch, an' there's plenty o' hosses in that thousan' acre pasture. I was thinkin' maybe you could set yoreself up on the corral fence an' enjoy yoreself a little. Jus' thought I'd tell yuh anyhow."

That was all Buck had to say, and having said it he walked away rapidly.

Windy and his men, seeing that there was no other way of getting horses than by catching one with which to round up the others, had reluctantly gone out into the pasture as soon as it was light enough to see. They hoped that by forming into line and closing in gently some one of them could rope a horse; but the horses knew the length of a rope as well as the men, and knew the corners and pockets of the pasture better than the men. Some of the horses were old and even gentle, but these, like Red Clark's Trixie, which was almost a pet, caught zest from the wilder horses; and all of them showed a tantalizing interest in the new game. They would gather in bunches, with ears pointed forward alertly, peering, curiously, or at times even stand and crop as if unaware that men were in the pasture, moving up stealthily—then, suddenly, as if at a signal, the horses would bolt.

Red Clark was sitting on the corral fence, smoking cigarets, grinning. Juan was up on a hill side, under a tree, rifle by his side; his position was one of great strategy in case the men grew weary of tramping out in the pasture and militantly turned toward the house.

The cook, who usually went about in a gray woolen undershirt, had polished his hair with a bit of lard, put on a blue shirt, and got out a long-forgotten white apron. He talked to himself as he prepared breakfast, saying over and over that "she was sho' like ol' times!" He went in person to notify Mrs. Allen and Jane that breakfast was ready.

It was from him that they learned of what had happened the night before. The cook gestured and postured, describing Buck's coolness; he scowled and stormed, showing how Buck had run the men out of the dining room. The women understood the air of exaggeration, and having seen the men actually tramping about in the pasture, almost against their wills had to believe that this man whom they thought was Larry La Rue was running the ranch just about as the cook described.

It was along toward the middle of the forenoon, and Buck was sitting on the ground by Juan, both watchfully waiting for the time when the men, disgusted and savage-tempered, would come from the pasture where they might almost as well have been trying to rope shadows as to corner the horses.

Buck was touched on the arm by Juan; and turning to where Juan pointed out over the low brown hills, he caught sight of two men in the distance riding toward the ranch.

"Friends o' Saunders, you reckon?"

"*Quien sabe?*" said Juan.

"Maybe so. Unh-huhn. But I doubt if Saunders has got any two friends as would come ridin' in here, broad daylight. If them galoots come draggin' their tails outta the pasture, have 'em set down an' rest themselves awhile. An' if you've got to shoot, don't shoot to scare nobody. Knock 'em over! I'm goin' down here a little piece an' wait for these *hombres* as are ridin' in. So many folks ridin' in, she 's liable to get hot an' active."

As he went by the corral, Buck told Red to stay on the fence, and if it seemed necessary to shoot, to shoot straight, "'cause," said Buck, "we ain't liable to get no decent funeral if them galoots get the upper hand."

Buck then walked down and sat on the water trough until the two horsemen came nearer; then he stood up, waiting, scrutinizing them. His self-assurance and training had been such that he did not consider two-to-one as odds: one man would be dead before the other knew that trouble had begun.

These horsemen were both young fellows, lean, brown, range-bred. Both wore two guns, and rifles were under their legs. The face of one, in spite of the baked-clay tan, showed splotches of freckles. One horse had the brand of the Arrowhead, the other the double H of the Hammrasmiths; which was odd, for the Arrowhead and Hammarsmiths were not friendly.

They rode near Buck, stopped their horses, waited a minute, looked appraisingly at him, then one said—

"Howdy."

"Howdy," Buck answered.

Another pause, then one inquired—

"Young La Rue hereabouts?"

"Yeah, I reckon."

"You happen to be him?" asked the freckled fellow.

"I'm him," said Buck, and as he said it he put finger and thumb to each side of his hips, and hitched up his trousers.

The horsemen regarded him with interest, then the speckled man spoke up:

"Me, I'm Blade Jones. This here, he's Tom Walker. We're neighbors o' yourn, with a kind o' little hole-in-the-wall outfit 'tween you an' Cunnin'ham. We dang near know all our cows by their first names."

"Glad to meet yuh," said Buck without emphasis.

"Well, we come a rampin' over this mornin' for two reasons, one o' the which is ol' George, yore paw, he used to buy our beef cut, the reason bein' that if we tried to put stock in the Perez yards the inspectors 'd have said ours was an overlaid brand, or our cows had foot an' mouth sickness. We're innercent little lambs, both o' us. But Jim Barley 'r Cunnin'ham, they don't like us none. We was wonderin', would *you* buy, same as ol' George he done?"

"There's the Arrowhead and Hammersmiths," Buck suggested. "Sell to them."

"Yeah, but we can't. The Hammersmiths don't wanta 'fend Barley, an' Jake Spencer he don't prove o' the way we got our range there in Eagle Roost Canyon. Jake's the squarest feller on earth, an' though we ain't done nothin' wrong he says we are a couple o' —— fools. Un'erstand," Blade Jones added with emphasis, "that I'd crawl offen my hoss right here, curl up an' die f'r Jake Spencer o' the Arrowhead, because, by——, he's a man. But will you buy our stock?"

"If gold mines was sellin' four bits a piece," said Buck, not quite truthfully, "I couldn't buy more 'n a couple. But if yore trouble is like what you say, you can bunch yore stock with mine. I'm liable to be shippin' heavy. An' we might make it understood plenty before-hand there in town that any inspector as finds anything wrong with ary cow in our herd will be invited to eat said cow, the which to be done at one settin' an' 'fore company."

"The which is 'greeable to us, I reckon. What do you say, Blade."

"Yeah," said Blade. "I reckon as how you take after ol' George La Rue more than folks 'pear to think. 'Nother reason we come is this here. One of our kids was into town yesterday, an' Pop Murdock he sends back word to us to be shore an' hurry over here an' say howdy to you. Pop, he's mighty cautious about who he likes, but he 'pears to think you an' us 'll be plumb neighborly. I'm kinda gettin' them suspicions myself. Ain't you, Tom?"

"Yeah," said Tom Walker, grinning.

"I'm a heaped pleased," Buck answered, but without a tone of being pleased.

What he thought was that Pop Murdock, knowing very well that he was not La Rue, but an imposter, had sent these young range wolves over to cut in on a share of the loot. Buck's experience was such that it caused him to suspect the honesty of nearly all men, certainly of all strangers.

Blade Jones, rising in his stirrups and craning his neck, was peering up beyond the house toward the pasture. He looked at Buck and asked—

"What's them fellers *walkin'* round about?"

"They're exercisin'," said Buck.

"Huhn?"

"Yeah. They're exercisin' of their memory. They forgot to see that the night hoss stayed in the corral."

"Why," said Blade Jones, "come on Tom. Le's go run in the hosses for 'em."

"Just a minute!" Buck interposed, raising his hand slightly; then after a moment's scrutiny of their faces, he asked quietly, "Either o' you boys know Windy Mills?"

"Yeah, yuh bet!" said Tom Walker, with a long-drawn inflection and grinning as if the name brought pleasant recollections.

Then Blade Jones spoke up:

"Las' time as we saw Windy, the which has been quite a while back, me an' Tom here stayed to supper in his camp over to Eagle Roost Canyon—an' we been campin' there ever since!"

"Him an' two other fellers," Tom Walker explained, "they was settin' on a waterhole our cows was jus' honin' for. He was workin' for Cunnin'ham, an' Cunnin'ham he's owned by Jim Barley, an' Jim Barley, he's owned by the railroad. That's how we got into a pile o' trouble. Yeah. We invited Windy to depart from the which hole, an' Windy he up an' went, huffy-like, though we had spoke perlite—didn't we Blade?"

"Yeah. Mr. La Rue, he wouldn't even stay to supper though he'd cooked it hisself. Is this here Windy person 'round these here parts? We'd sort-a like to say howdy, wouldn't we Tom?"

"Yeah," said Tom, "if we was facin' 'im. I'd be powerful oneasy to have 'im behind my back!"

Buck, with jerk of head, indicated the horse pasture:

"He's 'mong them as is present out there. 'Twas me as let the hoss outta the corral las' night."

Tom Walker spoke up:

"I don't understand the which clear an' luminous, Mr. La Rue, but I can see yuh ain't onhappy none, so I reckon our hosses they is plumb tired out. They'd shore drop if they went another step."

With that Tom Walker swung himself from the saddle, and Blade too dismounted. They came close to Buck, looking at him with a keen new interest, much as if discovering a long lost friend.

"Mr. La Rue," said Tom, "I'm not like this speckled feller yuh see here by my side. The bes' thing yuh can say about him is that he's my pardner. Me, I'm an oncurious feller. I never hanker none for to ask questions, but I'm a *powerful* good list'ner!"

"We've heard," said Blade Jones, "what happened to Saunders an' Smoky Pete there in town, which sort a increased our feelin' as how we'd be neighborly."

"Didn't you boys know," asked Buck, "as how Windy Mills an' fellers like him was here on the ranch—under Saunders?"

"Saunders, yeah. But me an' Blade, bein' remote an' aloof, we don't hear much news, 'cept what Pop Murdock sends out to us. Y'see, that Mexican sher'ff has got some papers he's got a notion for to serve if he can catch us when we ain't lookin'. An' Cunnin'ham, so folks say, has got a box full o' gold coins for the man as can drop us outta the saddle. The which makes us a wee mite precautious."

"But we did hear," put in Blade Jones, "as how Saunders *wasn't* workin' for the Eighty-Eight no more."

"Neither is Windy Mills nor any of his men," said Buck. "They're fired, an' after hosses for to ride off."

"Whee-oo!" Tom commented admiringly. "They 'pear to be moseyin' in, too. Mind if we walk up that away an' say, howdy to Windy?"

"Come along," Buck told them.

VI

WINDY MILLS and his men were tired and sore, they were covered with dust, their feet hurt; they had had no breakfast; they had chased about over the pasture and the chase was hopeless. Some one from a hill side had seen the horses of Walker and Jones, and the men came straggling in, half hopefully, at least determined. They came near the corral, sullen, angry, very tired.

Windy spoke—

"Mr. La Rue, I allow we're licked."

"Well if there ain't ol' Windy Mills!" cried Tom Walker with a note of jubilant recognition.

"It shore is!" Blade Jones yelled. "What yuh been doin', Windy? Rollin' in the dust for to git the fleas off? You allus was troubled that way!"

Windy tried to ignore Walker and Jones; he did not like them; they had got him into trouble with Cunningham.

"Mr. La Rue," said Windy, "if you'll help us to git hosses, we'll be ridin'."

"Where was yuh thinkin' about goin'?" asked Buck.

One man by Windy's side spoke up:

"We're goin' a-git plumb to —— away from here—that's shore!"

The presence of Tom Walker and Blade Jones increased their discouragement, for these were gunmen, bad men, virtually outlaws, in that warrants were out for them. Rustling was the charge, though nobody believed it, least of all Cunningham who had sworn to the charge.

"We're goin' for to leave like you said," Windy told him.

"Where have you been bunchin' up the Eighty-Eight cows?" Buck inquired.

"Who said we'd been runnin' off any cows?" Windy asked with a faint air of indignation.

"Me," Buck told him.

"Well tain't so!"

"If that's the way you feel, go back out there an' catch yore hosses. You can walk 'em down in two 'r three days. But you don't eat meanwhile. Nary a bite on this here ranch."

"I'm hungry!" said a man to Windy. "Water's what I want," another said. "Can't we have a drink?" some one asked.

"Can I have my cows back?" Buck asked.

"They ain't been drove offen yore range!" said Windy with the note of injury.

"That there's right!" said a fellow by Windy's side.

"We been accused wrong!" another spoke up, and his tone seemed to indicate great mental suffering, or perhaps it was due to aching feet.

"I ain't playin' no game o' checkers with you galoots," Buck told them, "an' I'm not tryin' for to display no gift o' mind readin'. You've been up to somethin', an' you stay here—all you—no chuck an' no water, till I find out what. Don't try to scratch yore itchin' fingers on yore gun butts neither, till yuh take a look up there where Juan is a-settin' with a rifle on his knee. A little slow with a six-gun, like most greasers, but plumb brisk with a Winchester, an' willin' for to demonstrate, prompt!"

The men turned and stared, discouraged. There was the little Mexican some three hundred feet off in the shade, with sombrero tilted forward and a rifle on his knee.

"Windy," said Blade Jones, "yuh allus was some pert o' speech. Why yuh so danged silent-like now?"

Windy ignored him, and half indignantly, with a tone of anger, the tone of a bad loser, said:

"We ain't been doin' nothin' wrong. Jus' bunchin' some cows over in Flacco Valley—where there's good feed!"

Flacco Valley meant nothing to Buck, who was a total stranger to the country; but Blade Jones spoke up:

"Good feed ——! That there's the way ol' George used to make his fall drive afore the railroad come. You ort-a remember, Mr. La Rue. There's a cut off. To git out, one place you've got to go over the pass. The cattle go nigh twenty mile steady up hill, but it saves you goin' half way across the Basin. What was you bunchin' cows in there for when there's a railroad for to ship by?"

"Enterprisin' feller," said Buck. "Enterprisin' feller, this Windy. I reckon he was thinkin' some o' headin' south an' startin' up a cow ranch of his own."

"It was Saunders!" a man near Windy protested quickly. "He was foreman. We jus' done what he tol' us!"

"That there's right!" Windy exclaimed, wiping his face with a forearm. "You go have it out with Saunders if yuh want!"

"Saunders 'd show him!" said one of the men with satisfaction.

"My but you fellers are ignerant!" Tom Walker exclaimed. "Ain't you-all heard the news yit? Him there—" Walker pointed a thumb at Buck—"him there in town—ain't nobody told yuh? Well Windy, I'm powerful onhappy for to give yuh such sor'ful news, but yore friend Smoky Pete, he ain't no more; an' yore friend Saunders he don't claim Bitter Crick no more for the place he was hatched. Mr. La Rue here he done it, with his little gun he done it. Them's shore sad tidin's, Windy. Sad tidin's, seein' as yore friend Saunders he has been struttin' hisself as the Bad Bad Man right offen the headwaters o' Bitter Crick."

"An' Windy hisself," Blade Jones said with perky interest, "he's sorta put hisself up for to be a Bitter Cricker too. He won't even stay to supper with ord'nary cowpunchers like me an' Tom here."

"Shet up, you Blade," said Tom. "Can't yuh see Mr. La Rue has got his mouth all puckered for to speak, an' Windy has got them blanket-sized ears o' hissen cocked to harken."

Buck asked questions about Flacco Valley and the stock there; Windy, putting all the blame on Saunders, answered them. Under pressure of questions, and putting the blame on Saunders, he also said that the orders were to keep the women scared. "We wouldn't a-really hurt 'em for anything," he explained virtuously. Windy made the guess that Cunningham and Barley didn't want any heirs in the country while the estate was being "settled."

"Hones'," said Windy, "we thought we was doin' right as they was orders."

"For a highly 'complished liar," said Blade Jones in a tone of disappointment, "yuh 're makin' a mighty pore showin' now. An' Windy, I've allus bragged you up as one o' the best!"

"You fellers," Windy replied angrily, goaded into taking notice of them. "You stole Cunnin'ham's water, then throwed in with the Eighty-Eight."

"We never stole nothin'," said Blade Jones loftily. "We jus' took the which from a bunch o' thiefs as had run out a pore misguided nester. If Cunnin'ham had put some real men in there for to hold his water, me an' Tom here never would athought o' sech o' thing. But you, Windy, you an' them fellers like yuh, the presence o' you-all was like an invitation to a dance with a school-ma'am. An'—" this more seriously —"if we'd a knowed as how you was here a-scarin' women we'd a been over a-fore this for to see yuh, much as we dislike to leave our own stampin' grounds lest some o' Cunnin'ham's varmints come in while we're away. Windy, you are two feet lower 'an a snake's belly."

"An' a powerful bad cook," put in Tom Walker. "That there supper o' yores we et the time you wouldn't stay, though we asked yuh perlite, it near pizened us. If you want to git a name for a killer, Windy, you jus' feed fellers yore biscuits. It's deadlier than yore lead!"

"If Goda'mighty made him in the imige o' man," said Blade Jones, "I bet He set him there outside the house for to dry an' the devil he come along an' poked a coyote's soul into 'im. Don't you ever feel no yearnin' o' nights to git off on a hilltop an' howl, Windy?"

"Shet up, you Blade," said Tom Walker. "Yore almos' gittin' pers'nel!"

"Aw I wouldn't hurt nobody's feelin's for the world," said Blade.

Buck spoke to Windy, including the men with him:

"My first idee was for to make you fellers drive back my cows. But the sooner you're off the Eighty-Eight range, the faster you go, an' the farther you stay, the better we'll all like it—the which includes yoreselfs, for if I catch hair 'r hide o' any o' you on my range there'll be some fun'ral services. Now I'll have you some hosses run in, an' off you go!"

"The which bein' so," said Tom Walker promptly, "me an' Blade 'll light out f'r home. It would be plumb too encouragin' for Windy an' them cusses there to leave here first, knowin' both Blade an' me was absent. Come on, Blade, le's cheer Windy up by makin' him think we're scairt o' him!"

"Come over for to see us, some time," said Blade to Buck as he mounted. "But we can't give yuh no sech entertainin' as was had by all present this mornin'. 'Bye!"

" 'Bye ever'body," Tom Walker shouted, with flourish of hand including Windy Mills.

They set their horses into a'lope and rode off.

Buck, with a slight frown, watched them go. He was puzzled, wondering just how friendly they were, and what they had meant by coming. Undoubtedly, so he felt, they were in the secret that he was an imposter, and but for the fear that Windy and his men might break into the canyon and regain possession, they would have stayed to have an understanding with Buck.

Buck whistled up his horse, gave him to Red to saddle; and shortly afterwards a string of horses was run into the corral.

As the men moved about the corral, roping the horses, Buck watched them, Red watched, and Juan, who had come closer; but the luckless men were not now looking for a chance to get even. They saddled and rode off, and there was not a parting word spoken.

VII

BUCK and Juan were having a quiet talk together. Buck rolled a cigaret, but from under lowered hat brim eyed Juan's leathery face and spoke softly:

"—what chance has a pair o' good hones' outlaws like you an' me agin the hoss-thiefs an' cow-thiefs in this here man's country? I thought all I had to do was to come up here, say 'I'm La Rue,' an' take charge, grow me some whiskers an' be a big cowman, or sell out. Ol' Murdock an' Spencer know they have got the drop on me, an' 'twas Murdock as sent them two young wolves over here for to look things over. I ain't what yuh call plumb happy over the lay o' the land. I don't mind takin' anything I want away from anybody what's got it, but I ain't feelin' none so spry about takin' this here ranch away from them women. First place, anyhow, I gotta find out where ol' Spencer stands an' how much he wants f'r keepin' his mouth shet. If he wants too —— much, I'll throw the cards away—won't play the hand out. I gotta go over an' see Spencer, an' I promised them women as how they could go along. He knows I ain't La Rue, so he won't spoil things by tellin' 'em facts. He'll be reassurin', an' me an' him'll have an' understandin'."

CHAPTER VII

VISITORS

WITH a firmness that her mother could not resist, Jane insisted upon going with Buck to the Spencer ranch; but this led to certain complications for Mrs. Allen would not permit Jane to go without accompanying her; and Mrs. Allen could not ride, and would not try to ride, horseback. She had never been on a horse in her life, so there was nothing to do but, as Buck said, "to fit a couple o' broncs to a buckboard."

Red was put to the work of finding a pair of broncs that could be tied to a buckboard without kicking it to pieces and dragging the wreckage over the hills. The cook said that there were two horses that had been broken to drive, and he pointed out two lithe buckskins; but the cook was a bad guesser. Red knew it before he got the harness on even one of them; but decided that he might as well break them to drive as any others.

"It ain't no trick a-tall to break a pair o' broncs if yuh know how, the which I shore do," he explained to Jane who was perched on the fence, watching, interested. She had changed her attitude completely toward

Buck and Red, and particularly liked to listen to Red's odd comment. "They're jus' like women," he explained with an air of vast experience. "Yuh jus' hitch 'em up an' let 'em r'ar an' kick—but don't ever let 'em git away from yuh, 'cause then they'll never be worth a dang, an' are liable to run any ol' time yuh ain't lookin'. Yeah."

"Where, Mr. Red, did you learn so much about women?"

"From handlin' hosses," said Red complacently and, unruffled, at that instant he moved aside just in time to be missed by a pair of resentful heels that lashed out toward his head. "Whoa-oa-oa," he said soothingly. "Whoa, or I'll git a club an' beat yuh to death." Then, explanatory, "I don't really mean that, Miss, but yuh 've got to make broncs think yuh do—an' women."

"Women? All women?"

"Yeah. You bet. My knowledge o' women is what yuh call theory-etic. Mostly I've never knowed any but them wantin' women."

"Oh," said Jane doubtfully; then, innocently, "What kind of women, Mr. Red?"

"Wantin' women, they're called. I heard a sky-pilot call 'em that onct. Them as hang out in dance halls an' saloons, an' are allus wantin' yuh to buy 'em a drink or buck their layout. This sky-pilot he got quite some het up in advisin' fellers to shy off from 'em—he must-a been roped in hard sometime 'r other, he talked so fluent an' warnin'."

Red cautiously snapped the traces to a double-tree that had been fastened to the end of a log; and reins in hand, shouted—

"Git up an' git now if yuh want!"

The broncos lunged, pulled against each other, tried to turn round, reared; one would hit the collar while the other backed, then both together they charged as if to run away, but the log was heavy.

"Why don't you swear at them?" Jane suggested.

He did not reply then, but when the horses paused, shivering, angry, nervously excited and mystified, yet stood almost quiet as if to think the situation over, Red answered:

"I never cuss—much. I uster. Some fellers cuss an' it sounds awright. Some fellers an' it sounds jus' plumb empty an' loud. I got to thinkin' it over an' I'd cuss jus' to listen to how she sounded—an' it sounded danged empty, so I sort a quit. If the occasion is real needful, I express myself fluent, but that ain't cussin'—it's jus' speakin' what yuh feel. A growed man like me ain't no business cussin' aimless. A kid, after he learns good an' proper, ort a know he don't sound so important as he thinks—an' to hear a woman cuss makes me feel plumb bad."

Jane answered mischievously—

"I'll try to be careful near you."

"Aw you couldn't cuss. It takes trainin'."

"I can!"

"Yuh can't."

"Want to hear me?"

"No, gosh dang it, I don't!"

"What," she demanded, "is gosh dang it, if not cussin'?"

"Oh, it's jus' sayin' a little somethin'."

"What's cussin' then?"

"It's meanin' a whole lot more 'an yuh *can* say. When yore cussin' proper yore jus' lettin' folks know all the words in the language ain't what yuh call adyquate."

The horses again began bucking and plunging, leaping this way and that; and they tried to break into a gallop, but the log ploughed the ground and slowed them down.

" 'Portant thing," he explained to Jane, who was following close behind him, "is to git that runaway idee outta their heads. I'll work the pants clear offen 'em today, then tomorrer hitch 'em to a buckboard, an' the day after I'd drive 'em anywhere. They may nearly pull the arms offen a feller, but who wants pokey hosses?"

"Or pokey woman?" Jane suggested.

"I reckon," Red said thoughtfully as the broncs milled about. Then, "I wonder now what would a feller do hitched to a *pair* o' women?"

That afternoon Jane, who had been expecting to go horseback, said to her mother:

"I think I'll ride in the buckboard with you, Mother dear."

"I'm sure that it would be much more sensible than to try to ride one of those wild horses."

"That's why I am going in the buckboard. There will be two wild horses—and a man that can handle them. He's really a lovely boy, Mother. He doesn't like for ladies to swear and he thinks wantin' women are dreadful—"

"Jane! Jane, *what* did you say?"

"Mother, how could you! It's horrid to think what you think. I'm talking of w-a-n-t-i-n' women."

"Jane—" Mrs. Allen was quite positive—"I fear this rough life is having an influence on you. And Jane, now that we know Larry La Rue is to be trusted, there is no need at all to go to that Spencer ranch, so—"

"I wouldn't miss going for anything. It will be perfectly lovely—two wild horses and—Mr. Red is *not* handsome, but I like 'im. If there were fifteen or twenty more men here, just his kind, I think I would begin to like ranch life too!"

"*Jane!*"

II

MRS. ALLEN came near to refusing to go on the trip to the Spencers' when Red, sawing and jerking at the plunging broncs, brought the buckboard to a stop before her door. The broncs tossed their heads and champed their bits, foam flew from their mouths and their eyes rolled angrily.

"Hop right in, Mrs. Allen. I gotta hold these here lines or they'd be over behind them hills in two hops!"

"I'll ride in front, Mother," said Jane.

"It looks to me Mr. Red, as though they wanted to run away," said Mrs. Allen nervously.

"Shore they do. But after about ten mile they'll wonder they ever had such silly notions."

The women were hardly seated before the horses sprang forward with a lurch that nearly threw Mrs. Allen from the wagon. She cried out, "Oh my!" and grasped the seat as if holding on for her life.

"Now git up a sweat if yuh want!" Red told the broncs.

They swung at a lope around the corner of the house, hitting rocks and ruts; the buckboard careened like a dory broadside to a comber, and Mrs. Allen held her breath, expecting any moment to be pitched out. But buckboards were built for such travel. Jane, holding tightly, laughing, with hair flying, shouted vaguely toward her mother:

"Isn't it great!"

"Mercy *no!*" said her mother.

As they swung past the corral where Buck on foot beside his horse was talking to Juan, Jane impulsively flung up her hand, waving to him.

"He'll catch up with us, easy," Red said.

Buck was saying to Juan:

"—we prob'bly won't get back much afore tomorrer, late. You jus' sort-a set around an' wait. I'll know more about where we are at in this here game when I come back, then you can go back up to where my Dad is campin' an' have him come down for a talk. From the way Red's a-drivin' I'd better trot. Good kid, Red. But his thinkin' he's so hones' sort a-makes me laugh. There ain't no such animal on two legs."

Buck seemed to spring from the ground to the saddle, and to do it easily; then he galloped off without a backward glance toward the little old Mexican who watched him with a look of pride. Juan was a tried man and true, who more than once had showed a faithful courage. He now rolled a thin cigaret and sat down in the shade of the fence, watching as long as he could see a tiny puff of dust moving southward toward the Arrowhead range.

After the first few miles Mrs. Allen began to think of the return trip; she must come over all this rough ground again, behind those dangerous horses. The trip from Perez to the ranch had been made over a pretty good road, one that freighters had laid out when every six months or so they hauled in provisions to the ranch. Here was no road at all. Red had simply started out across the country, guided by a cowboy's sure instinct for directions that had been given, and Juan, who had given them, knew the country as well as he knew the inside of his hat. At times they had to drive a mile or more along arroyos to find a crossing, and the crossings Red made were alarmingly precipitous.

"Jus' you hold on, ladies!" he told them.

Jane herself soon began to wish that she might get out and walk, she was cramped and badly jarred, but said nothing about it, however, she wondered if anybody before had ever driven wild horses right ou across land like this.

Buck overtook the buckboard and rode beside it, or ahead, picking out crossings when needed. Little was said, for he was busily thinking about the coming meeting with Spencer and the women were too busy holding on and too tired to talk.

They stopped for lunch. Red unhitched his horses and got out the water and feed before paying attention to the women. Mrs.

Allen hobbled about painfully for a few minutes, as if crippled, getting the cramp out of her legs.

Buck had started a fire.

"This is *fun!*" Jane said, poking twigs on the fire that had been started for coffee. Then there was a shrill rattling *whirr-ir-ir-r-r-r!* behind her. She jumped instinctively, startled, demanding—

"What's that?"

Buck had already stood up and peered forward. There was a gun in his hand, and she had the curious sensation of feeling that this gun had *jumped* there of itself, for his hand had been empty but an instant before, and all that she had seen was the merest blur of motion. The snake, however, was not within striking distance of any one, but lay coiled in the sun by a patch of cactus.

"Watch yore hosses," said Buck to Red, and a moment later shot—the shots followed too fast to be counted. Jane had never seen any one shoot as he did. He held the gun in one hand and seemed to strike the hammer with the other. The first shot would have done for the snake, but he emptied the gun until it clicked on a shell.

The broncs were plunging, getting themselves tangled in harness and jerking at their ropes, but Red simply stood still and stared at Buck.

"I bet them bullets was a-crowdin' of each other gittin' outta the barrel," he said admiringly. "No wonder yuh walked into that dinin' room an' asked Windy an' them as a favor to try to throw a little scare into yuh! If I could shoot like that, I'd shore be goin' 'round huntin' trouble, promiscuss-like! Say, was you ever on a train Buck Harrison stuck up?"

Buck was prodding empty shells from their chambers and re-loading. He looked up inquiringly, steadily.

"Why you want a-know somethin' that ain't so for?"

"'Cause I promised a party there in town I would ask. There in town I seen yuh draw. Now I seen yuh fan a hammer. Man, you can shore shoot!"

"So far as I know, I was never any nearer Buck Harrison than I am now. Who was askin'?"

"The lady they call Nora. She had a notion as how you was on the train the time that varmint he stuck up the train. I allowed yuh wasn't—now I know it. That there danged outlaw would a-been carried off the train with some holes in 'im, the which I'd admire for to see. Goes about robbin' hones' folks an' a-shootin' 'em!"

The remainder of the way Buck rode well ahead of the buckboard and was very thoughtful. So this Nora, though evidently not quite sure, suspected him. He estimated vaguely, for it was only vaguely that he knew, how much reward money she could get by whispering her suspicions to other people. He wasn't one to cut and run readily, but that bit of information was disturbing.

He glanced across his shoulder to the buckboard, rocking and bumping behind the lively trot of the bronchos. Red and the girl sat side by side. He could see that she was now laughing, could tell that she was talking merrily. It was irritating, and something more and deeper, the way Red had spoken of Buck Harrison as a "varmint."

"Ranch or no ranch," he told himself. "I'm a —— fool if I don't light out o' this country, *pronto!*"

III

JAKE SPENCER, after his marriage, had built a new home about a half mile from the old ranch house; both were of adobe, with walls nearly two feet thick, and rough-hewn logs for the support of the roof. "Mud house," Mrs. Spencer called her home. But this home had a board floor—a freight wagon had brought out a load of lumber—with Indian blankets for rugs, and a lot of what the punchers called "fixin's;" the same being curtains, pictures, padded chairs, and a bed with a high "dash board." The punchers speculated with some sincere and much ribald wonderment as to just what was the purpose of that dash board; and they got no nearer to a satisfactory answer than other people who have pondered on the purpose of those old high head-board and foot-board beds.

The Arrowhead punchers had the greatest dislike for anything even remotely related to the Hammersmiths; and the Hammersmith riders were called "dude-scratchers." The two Hammersmith brothers were suspected of being English because they had been seen in boiled shirts and fried collars. They weren't English, however, but Easterners.

Anytime the Arrowhead boys got near a double H man they were suspicious, and listened with ears cocked for insult, simply aching for a fight, for they felt bitterly the disgrace put upon them by old Jake's fool wife. They despised her, but were elaborately respectful to her, though with a kind of sullen courtesy that she put down to shyness. In their hearts they pined for the day when old Jake would find out about her carryin's-on with young Cliff Hammarsmith—and shoot him; but they knew very well that Jake was likely to shoot any man who spoke against his wife, however truthfully. So with a kind of angry hope they waited for such a time as there would be trouble with the Hammersmith outfit and give them all a chance to shoot.

Buck, riding well ahead of the buckboard came up to the old ranch house and hallooed.

He was answered by a voice some three or four hundred feet off; then saw a man standing under a tree, and saw too that his bedding was on the ground, as if he had chosen to sleep off by himself.

Buck turned and rode up that way, but the man shouted:

"That there's clost enough. Stay where yuh are! You hear me!"

"What's the matter?"

The man answered in tones of weary exasperation:

"Feller, you're plumb innercent so far, but you're askin' for trouble. If I tell yuh, I'll shore have to bury yuh! I been out up here now a-diggin' me a graveyard, an' I 'spect to have it well occupied by sun-down when them punchers what was friends yesterday come back an' start ridin' me some more."

Buck had been riding slowly nearer, and he asked—

"What's the matter with yuh?"

"Don't come clost to me!"

"I won't hurt yuh none," said Buck.

"I know dang well yuh won't—but I'll prob'ly have to kill you."

"What for?" Buck inquired. "What 'll I do?"

"Yuh 'll laugh. Who are you, an' where yuh from?"

"Me I'm La Rue o' the Eighty-Eight."

"Oh yeah. Ol' Jake he was speakin' about you. Kinda favor'ble too. Next to a Hammarsmith the lowest thing on earth it is a Jim Barley or a Cunnin'hamer. Slab Saunders he is fittin' to be even a Hammarsmith. But now you stay back there!"

"What's the matter with you anyhow? I'm not a sher'ff."

"The which is an insultin' imputation, but I reckon I'll let 'er pass, the circumstance bein' what they is. No sher'ff 'd want to lay holt on me—yeah, you're beginnin' to guess it I see!"

Buck tilted his head a little and was sniffing.

"I'll give you the facts," the man said wearily, "but if yuh laugh I'll shore pack yore carcass out to my graveyard, the which I'm preparin' for them ringed-tail punchers as will be driftin' in here, come sundown. I'm gittin' kinda ust to the smell myself, but I ain't never goin' git ust to the remarks as is passed by fellers as was onct friends."

"I'd admire for to listen."

"It ain't no secret as yuh can smell, but dang you, don't laugh! Y'see we got a little fixed polecat here, the which has been raised f'r a pet, an' we sorta liked havin' him around, seein' as his name was Hammarsmith. It give us some pleasure for to call him an' cuss 'im. Well, las' night I was comin' up from the corral, an' this little feller got right in my road. I didn't want for to hurt him none, him bein' fixed an' harmless, so I pushed him aside with my foot, the which he resents prompt. Y'see it weren't little Hammarsmith a-tall. 'T was a stranger an' loaded f'r b'ar. Yeah. The boys they argued so much about my presence I had for to make camp up here, an' today I been burnin' my clothes an' sorta siddlin' off from myself. It's danged funny I reckon, but as yit I ain't been able for to laugh much. How long yuh reckon it 'll last? Yore laughin', dang yuh!" Then noticing the buckboard and the women, the fellow said earnestly, "Don't yuh tell 'em! I'm sufferin' 'nough. Git on up to the house—Miz Spencer she's up there—"

IV

MRS. LOLA SPENCER came to the doorway as soon as she heard the scrunch of wheels. When Red said, "Whoa!" it took only a slight pull of the lines to stop the broncs that then looked about as if saddened and weary. They, born cowponies, had been broken to the yoke.

Mrs. Spencer was a rather small woman, young, very blond, with a rather doll-like face on which, too, there was a doll-like vacuity. Her hands were as soft as a baby's; a Chinese cook and a Mexican girl did all of her work. She looked at these strange women with a stare of quick and thorough inspection even as she was welcoming them.

"I'm Mrs. Spencer. Do get out and come right in. Oh I'm so glad you 've come over. Isn't it terribly lonely in this country!" To Buck, "You wanting to see Jake? Well he 'll be in after while. Put up your horses and—"

Late in the afternoon men began to ride in. They came with no wild galloping and yelling, but rode quietly at the walk or trot. Horses and men had done a day's work. The men turned out their horses, washed up, combed their wet hair, and gathered outside the door of their bunk house, and with a kind of languid, drawling cheerfulness exchanged long distance remarks with their comrade who had monkeyed with the wrong polecat. Also they eyed Buck and Red with frank appraisal, asked about water, food, and matters of general range interest, but did not at all refer to the things of which they were most curious. It wasn't "manners" to inquire about personal matters from strangers, and the code of the range was rigorously observed on the Arrowhead.

The foreman was a tall dark man, silent, aloof, "gentle with hosses an' —— on men;" his name was Kay, and if he had more of a name than that no one, excepting possibly old Spencer, knew it.

With hair wet and face shining from soap and water, Kay came quietly through the doorway, said howdy to Buck and Red, paused, added—

"Want to see Jake, the boys was a-sayin'."

"Yes."

"He'll be along after while. When you hear 'Chuck!' come and set yourself at the table."

"Thanks."

Kay leaned against the dobe wall, appeared uninterested in anything, but now and then looked idly about him as the boys exchanged long distance jeers with the fellow who had mistook a stranger polecat for little "innercent" Hammarsmith.

Kay edged closer to Buck, and asked—

"Could you use a good puncher?"

"I reckon! About twenty of 'em."

"Mighty scarce all through the Basin this time o' year. Don't know where yuh could find any. Now Bill Higgins up there is a good man, but the boys 'll ride him loco here. He made a mistake the which was nat'ral; an' he 's took the joshin' well, so fur. But it 'll git wear'some *pronto*, an' Bill, like mos' good-natured men, is a bad feller for to git riled. I don't reckon he'll much want to go, cause he's one as thinks a lot o' Jake, but fur all hand's sake, I think he'd better go off some'eres fur a spell."

"I'll be powerful glad to get him," said Buck.

"Me an' him 'll have a talk after supper," said Kay.

A yell like that from a drunken Apache came from within the house; it was the cook announcing that supper was ready. Men turned eagerly, stamping and jostling; they rushed into the dining room, scrambled over the benches, reaching for food before seated, thrusting the dishes toward Red and Buck, who were "company" and as such had hung their belts and guns upon pegs of the wall.

While they were eating two horses went by.

"That'd be Jake an' the kid now," said some one. "He's shore gotta likin' for that kid," said another. "Yeah," a man answered; then silence came for a moment over the noisy table. The men were suddenly reminded of how much the kid looked like his sister. Jake liked her too.

Some of the men had finished supper and were straggling out of the room, rolling cigarets, talking carelessly, joshing, when Jake Spencer galloped to the door and jumped from his horse.

"Where's La Rue?" he called with voice high-pitched yet somewhat pleased.

"Inside, Jake, settin' with Kay."

Spencer, short and thin, dried up as if work and weather had worn him down to sinews, stamped hurriedly into the house. His broad hat was pushed to the back of his head, his mustache was long, his chin whiskers bristling.

As he caught sight of Buck he called welcomingly:

"Howdy there, you Eighty-Eight!"

"Howdy, Mr. Spencer."

Spencer put out his hand, and Buck glanced at him doubtfully, then shook hands.

"Come along outside for a talk," said Spencer.

"Shore," said Buck, rolling a cigaret.

They walked well away from the house. The sun had gone down, but it was yet light, with hazy shadows deepening on the mountains.

"Young feller," said Jake. "I jus' heard from the women up there to the house as how you wanted for to have a talk. What's troublin' of you? Gettin' conscience-struck?"

"Gettin' what?"

"Shamed o' yoreself?"

"Not notic'ble," said Buck. "I wanted a talk, an' I'll hustle 'er out; the which is: Mr. Spencer, how much do you calculate to get for keepin' still about me not bein' La Rue?"

"Eh? What's that? What you sayin'?"

"How much of a split do you an' Murdock count on gittin' outta me?"

"Me an'—young feller, do you know what you 're sayin'?"

"I heard myself speak. Yeah."

"Do you think I'd touch a dollar I didn't sweat for?" the wiry old cattleman demanded with rising anger. "Do you think I'm a —— hoss-thief an' cow-rustler? Do you think—why —— yore onery soul, do you think Jake Spencer would *steal!*"

"I begin to wonder," said Buck.

"You gin to—why, you miser'ble blackleg woman-robbin' skunk, you! I 'll tell you—"

For the first time in his life Buck took a straight out and out cussing, and it was a good one; he grew red of face and angry, but his anger seemed to have no fire, for old Spencer's indignation was thoroughly honest.

Buck interrupted him, demanding:

"What the —— else was I to think—you knowin' I wasn't La Rue, yet there in town you as much as said to me, 'Go ahead an' I'll see you later about it?' What the —— else could I think?"

"You thought me an' Murdock was joinin' in with you! You 're a plumb —— fool if you can't read the ear-cut o' men like Murdock better 'an that. An' served me right I reckon f'r winkin' at yuh! But I can go now an' tell them women yuh ain't La Rue—though they 're up there singin' yore praise like she was a hymn. That's why when I come down I shook yore dirty hand. I thought you 'd turned man!"

"But you were willin' to let a humbug La Rue like me steal the ranch. Nat'ral I thought you wanted a share!"

"Larry La Rue hisself was a dirty low-lived thievin' lyin' sneak an' sheep-dog. I knowed ol' George meant him never to have a hair offen the ranch. I don't care what the law-fellers say about it, I know it 'd be jus' as much stealin' f'r him to git anything offen that ranch as f'r a common rustler to run off Eighty-Eight cows. Where is that blankety-blank of a blank La Rue feller anyhow?"

"—— knows," Buck answered, "I don't. Dead, some say."

"Not much, I bet. Them kind that ort a die, don't. He's sneakin' through life, somehow, like a coyote."

"Well, Spencer, I don't know where the —— he is, an' I ain't carin'. When all 's said an' done, I've got as much hones' right to some o' that ranch as anybody, an' I'm out to get my share."

"Huhn?"

"I said 'er plain, an' you heard me."

"An' like yuh meant it, but would you mind elucidatin' some. How's a thief like you got any hones' right to the Eighty-Eight?"

"Since you 've sort a-played square with me, here's the yarn. A lot o' years ago this feller you knowed as ol' George La Rue was pardners with a feller down near the Border. This feller was young them days, an' a high-rider named Boyd—"

"Boyd?"

"Yeah. The same as killed La Rue there in Perez an'—"

"Say, I ust to know a Boyd. What sort o' feller—"

"I'm tellin' yuh, give me time," said Buck. "Come a time when Boyd he shot an army off'cer—"

"The same by ——!" cried Spencer.

"You knowed him?"

"Knowed him! Well! Tell yore story, boy. That off'cer needed killin'. Shore I knowed Jack Boyd!"

"He 's my dad," said Buck. "Well, you know then he had to light out. The whole cavalry was combin' the country for him. An' Boyd he went what's called bad—"

"I know. I know," said old Spencer excitedly. "He was bad but in purt-near the right way! Onct he saved a bunch o' them army fellers as was cut off by greasers an' Injuns. Boyd done that!"

"Well, this feller you knowed as La Rue he sold off the stock an' he took Boyd's wife an' they lit out. Near as I know they went first one place then another, never 'stayin' long till they landed up here in the San Arnaz. They was afraid o' Boyd."

"Good cause why," said Spencer, nodding rapidly.

"Boyd he rode ever'where a-lookin', an' I reckon he raised some —— as he rode. Then he moves over into Oklahoma an' gets hisself some cows an' scratches out a dugout. There's a nester walks in an' sets down clost by. Cowmen thereabouts tries to stampede this here nester, but he ain't timid. Boyd—only his name it is Harris then—throws in with this nester. When the smoke it is all cleared away, the nester an' Boyd is still there, an' out o' gratytude, I reckon, the nester's daughter she marries Boyd an' goes over to live in the little dugout where me, I'm hatched. Things go along fairly quiet till some years ago, then somebody what ain't got the sand to stand up to my ol' dad personal, runs into Fort Reno with the tale that my dad ain't who he says he is a-tall, but he is that feller Boyd who shot an off'cer long time back. There ain't nothin' for dad to do but light out, an' me I go too. He tries to talk me out, but me, I stan' pat. We don't do nothin' spechul—" said Buck cautiously "—for to be talked about, movin' about a little, workin' here an' there, till he meets up with this La Rue there in Perez. Dad hears about the big ranch an' all, an' he allows as how I've got some hones' whack to the ranch. He talks earnest an' me I put some blackin' on my hair to make her look like the other La Rue's, an' ride in. It happens that Juan Hurtados is a friend o' ourn an' he sets in the game. That there is my yarn. Usual I ain't so long-winded, but I've spread my cards, face-up. Now le''s hear yore remarks on the which."

"You ol' Jack Boyd's son? Well, well! Boyd it ain't no oncommon name, so when the man as settled La Rue told us how his name was Boyd there in Perez, I never thought much. But if yore father is Jack Boyd, the which I knowed thirty year ago an' knowed well, as Murdock done too—I reckon, well, I shore reckon women is goin' a-be took care of if you are anything like him. Legal, I don't 'spose you 've got any claim to the Eighty-Eight, but 'cordin' to what's right, I reckon you have. Murdock in town there, he said to me, 'Jake, you ol' fool, you leave that feller to pass for La Rue, 'cause Jim Barley ain't a-goin' be able to handle him. Him,' he said, meanin' you, 'has got the mark o' the old Border days.' Yeah, Murdock an' me knowed yore father well. Where is he now? I'd powerful like for to see Boyd?"

"Well, y'see, him havin' killed La Rue that away, he thought best not to be around when I showed up, less folks get to talkin' an' say 'twas me give ol' La Rue away so he'd get killed an' give me the chance to horn in on the ranch."

"The which Larry La Rue hisself," said Spencer, "would not be above doin' to his own father. An' son, when you git word to yore father you can tell him Jake Spencer, nor ol' Sam Murdock there in Perez, ain't forgot none the Jack Boyd o' the ol' Border days. Ain't none o' the old-timers but would speak up for Boyd, an' lots o' the old Army men too. I never knowed his pardner—clean forgot his name even now—"

"Allan—that was La Rue's right name."

"Shore! So 'twas. I never knowed Allan personal. Heard o' him, shore. Queer, me livin' longside o' him up here fifteen year or thereabout—I come in about fifteen year ago. Why —— his soul, I'd a-shot him, myself, though to say truth, I didn't have no over-powerin' dislike f'r him. He had some admirin' qualities. Jack Boyd he was good leather, son. You be half the man yore daddy was an' you 'll shore be a good un!"

"Can't be done," said Buck.

"Yore right I reckon. But from the way yuh settled Saunders there in town, an' the way you played —— with Windy Mills an' his men on the ranch, I reckon yore enough Boyd f'r me not to do no worryin' over keepin' my mouth shet when legal I ort a speak up. I ain't much on the legal doin's. I b'lieve a feller ort to do what's right, allus. You 'll do 'er, too. I can tell from the way them women are singin' of your praise."

In the darkness that had come upon them, Jake Spencer silently groped for Buck's hand, and shook it hard.

V

THE next morning Red Clark hitched up his broncs. Having rested and perhaps talked matters over between them rebelliously, they were again restive; they sidled and reared, plunging this way and that. Red talked to them abusively, but in a pleased tone, and scrambling into the seat he let them go at a 'lope, but with footbrake and tug of lines proudly brought them to a stop before the house where Mrs. Spencer was telling Mrs. Allen and Jane how glad she was they had come, what a lovely visit it had been, how sorry she was to see them go. It seemed that her doll's head was troubled by nothing but the loneliness of the country, and though Mrs. Allen had sympathized strongly, Jane, to whom she had talked a little more freely than to Mrs. Allen, did not like her.

Mrs. Spencer's young brother—the Spencer kid, as he was called—stood where Jake and Buck talked together, and he looked up at Buck with a kind of envious adoration, examining the way Buck's two guns were low slung, watching his easy slouch that somehow kept the shoulders square, noting the tilt of Buck's hat and half furtively trying to give his own the same backward tilt.

Jake Spencer was saying:

"Good men on the range these days are scarcer 'an hones' men in Perez; an' Bill Higgins is a good un, an' I reckon Kay is right in thinkin' he ort-a go. Bill he understands an' 's right willin'. He don't want to lose his temper 'mong friends an' he knows he will if they don't—"

Jane went up to the buckboard and said:

"I think you are a perfectly wonderful driver, Mr. Red. I really do. But I think my cousin ought to drive going back. There are some business things we must talk about. You won't mind, will you?"

She knew very well that he did mind and she could see his face fall, but he said:

"Shore, miss. One o' the things I can do better 'an anything else is whatever you want."

Jane gave him a really pleasant smile for that handsome compliment, then crossed over to Buck and said:

"Mr. Red will ride your horse and you will drive going back."

"Is that so? What's the matter with Red?"

"Nothing. He is wonderful with horses. But I want to have a talk with you."

Buck noticed her quick look and smile at Spencer, and when Buck eyed him questiongly, the little old cattleman was biting the end off an end of hard twist big as his two thumbs and trying to look innocent.

"He's told, plumb spilled the beans," said Buck to himself, and was almost surprized at how little he cared.

"A good man's been drivin' 'em," said Red as he gave over the lines. "Broncos is smart. They know when a feller's hair it is aw-burn."

Mrs. Allen gathered her skirts about her and was helped into the rear seat. A box of lunch put up by the Chinese cook was stowed at her feet. Mrs. Spencer's Mexican girl grinned from the doorway and lifted her hand in a gesture of friendly parting.

"Come again, anytime an' stay—" Mrs. Spencer lifted her voice to make the words carry as the buckboard started.

The broncos knew of course that another man now held the reins, and they were determined to try out at once. They ran for a mile against firm bits, then willingly dropped into a trot, shaking their heads as much as to say; "No use. He knows how to drive too. Maybe one o' these days we'll catch somebody that don't, then we'll show 'em a thing or two."

"Don't you like Mrs. Spencer?" Mrs. Allen asked as well as she could amid the jolting of the wagon.

"No, I don't!" said Jane.

"Why? She seemed lovely!"

"Lovely! I thought her horrid, the way she talked of Mr. Spencer."

"I don't recall, Jane. What did she say?"

"Didn't she tell you? Well she told me that the man she really loved back in Kansas had married another girl. Mr. Spencer came to Kansas City with a train load of cattle. She had known him a long time—and she just married him to spite the man she loved. Know what I told her? I said you ought to have poisoned his wife—"

"Jane!"

"—then have married that man you loved, that is if you really wanted to spite *him!*"

"Jane, you didn't?"

"Mother, I did! And she just laughed that little baby laugh and looked coy."

"Why, Jane, I thought her very sweet."

"Mother, you have poor judgment. Now I *am* a sweet lovely girl, but you don't think so. You do though, don't you, La-La-Larry?"

"Yeah," said Buck, embarrassed. "Yeah, you bet."

"Larry—" she was oddly pleasant, as if teasing—"Larry, you are a fraud."

"Huhn? Yeah, I reckon. Spencer he tol' yuh?"

"He did!"

Buck stared at her. She looked quite happy about it.

"And," she added, "I believe him. I can see that you are not at all the sort of boy that Uncle George thought."

"Huhn? I don't quite—I'm not like—what you gettin' at?"

"Mr. Spencer—I love *him*—he said you were a much finer boy than Uncle George knew. And Larry, he said *you* could explain how it all came about, if you wanted to. He wouldn't, though I coaxed ever so hard. He said you could. He said, 'Miss Allen, your uncle thought the boy was a coward, and you 've seen enough to know that he isn't. And in other ways too he's not at all like your uncle thought.' And Larry?"

"Yeah?"

"You have just got to explain to me!"

"The old son-of-a-gun!" said Buck.

"Who?"

"Jake Spencer. Puttin' me in a hole like that!"

"That isn't a nice way to talk about him, after what he said of you, is it now?"

"Maybe not I reckon, but—"

"But what, Larry?"

"Say, it's powerful hard to talk an' watch these here broncs."

"Mr. Red could. You are surely as good a driver as he?"

"He wasn't havin' to talk about the same things as me."

"Larry?"

"Yeah."

"Larry, *why* did you let Uncle George believe that Henry woman's story?"

"Huhn?"

"You didn't get her to steal for you, did you? To rob—I know you didn't!"

"No, I never got no woman to do my stealin' for me."

"Mr. Spencer said that he *knew* positively that you didn't do it."

"Well that ol' ——!" Buck exclaimed, now seeing through Spencer's good offices. "He's shore right. I never, miss."

"Jane," she corrected. Then, earnestly reproachful, "Why did you let poor old Uncle George think so? It simply broke him all up. He was simply starving for somebody to love—and he poured out his heart to me, to *me* whom he had never seen. Why didn't you explain to him Larry?"

"Well—well—y'see—uh—I reckon maybe I didn't have no chanct."

"You mean he wouldn't listen, Larry?"

"I reckon he was the kind that when he was mad he wouldn't listen to nobody but hisself. Yeah. That's it. Shore."

"Larry," she said kindly, "there *is* a will, and in it everything is left to me and mother. Uncle George made it many years ago. I don't know where it is, but it will be found, because he made it—"

"I might near hope so," said Buck.

"I believe you do, Larry," said Jane, looking at him closely, kindly. "And now I am going to tell you what else Mr. Spencer said last night. He said that anybody who knew men could tell at a glance that you were a good one for bad ones to let alone. And he said when the will did turn up that the best thing mother and I could do for ourselves was to keep you on the ranch. And you *are* going to stay, aren't you?"

"I reckon, maybe. He's shore a queer ol' coyote, that ol' Jake." Then Buck added, mentally, "For a feller what is so danged hones' too. These hones' galoots, like him, they shore has queer notions."

VI

ALONG late in the afternoon they came within sight of the Eighty-Eight ranch house.

Red was a half mile or so behind, riding beside Bill Higgins, who even in the open air still carried with him a slight skunk odor; and though Higgins, who had a led horse bearing tarpaulin and blankets, talked much, Red scarcely listened to what he said and could hardly keep from chuckling when he thought of little Hammarsmith.

As the buckboard drew near the ranch house, Jane said—

"My, but doesn't it look lonely!"

There was not a sign of human life near the sprawling squat adobe.

"Juan ort have poked his head out afore this," said Buck.

"Perhaps he's asleep."

"Never much of a hand for to sleep. Mighty wide awake, old Juan."

Buck stopped the horses before the water trough at the corral. Jane jumped off the seat, and Mrs. Allen climbed down, saying:

"We'll walk. I want to get some of the stiffness out of my knees."

Buck was not listening. He gave the horses their heads and let them drink, then he whistled. It was a long shrill wavering call, a sound that could be heard afar, but there was no answer.

"—— funny," said Buck.

He drove near a shed under which the buckboard was kept, unharnessed the horses, turned them loose, and was hanging the harness on wooden pegs when he heard a cry, and looking toward the house he saw Jane beckoning excitedly for him, heard her call:

"Oh come—quick! Somebody's—"

He ran toward her. Red and Higgins, having rode near, saw him running, and they spurred for the house, getting there before Buck.

"Look, just look in our room there!" said Jane. "Somebody's been here and just look!"

They looked through the door into the room where Mrs. Allen stood staring about in a kind of bewilderment. Everything was turned up-side down and scattered; even the women's clothing had been flung about. There was not a spot that had not been searched, everything ransacked. But matches and candle grease showed that the search had been made at night.

"Looks like a bunch o' cows had stampeded this here way," said Red.

"Who could have done it and why?" Jane asked. "We had nothing to steal!"

"Miss," said Buck slowly, "my guess is they was a-lookin' for that will which ain't been found. Juan must be here some'eres, an' that cook. Let's poke around."

With Buck in the lead the men went round to the kitchen. No one was there, but the remains of food and dirty dishes on the table showed where many men had eaten; and a lantern left on the table indicated that they had eaten at night.

"Las' night," said Red.

They then entered the bunk room. Bedding had been tossed about, blankets were missing.

"Windy an' his men," said Red. Come for their blankets! Sorry we wasn't here to entertain—"

Near a window Buck found the body of Juan, rifle still held in his hand, and emptied shells scattered about him. He had made a lone fight and had been killed.

Red Clark cursed deeply. The outrage of many against one angered him, and he had grown to like the odd little old greaser. He stared inquiringly toward Buck.

Buck, looking down at the little Mexican, stood quietly. He was thinking of the time that Juan, with the bridle reins of four horses in one hand, his revolver smoking in the other, held angry town's people at bay until Buck and his men came out of a bank carrying a sack of gold; and of another time when Juan, at night, with his hands tied behind him, spurred the horse on which he was riding to one side of the trail, down a shale slope, escaping from the posse, and through the night, with the reins in his teeth, guiding the horse with jerk of head and pressure of knee, he had ridden twenty miles to warn Buck that the posse was coming and knew just about where to search.

Windy Mills and his men, Saunders too perhaps, had come and done this thing, many against one.

Buck stooped and lifted the small body, misshapenly rigid, and laid it on a bunk.

"Jus' as I thought, they got him in the back. Somebody sneaked around the house. Eight men o' them by the plates in there—One ort 've kept 'em off easy enough if they didn't play some trick."

"Here!" said Red, "See *here!*"

He had plucked from the wall a piece of paper stuck there by a match in a crack, and on the paper was a scrawl:

> Warnen! Git out the contry, all you ——. This heer shows weuns mean bizness. Women an' all git out. You to you—LA RUE.

Buck spelled it out, aloud. Buck could read and write only with difficulty. Then he looked at Red Clark, from Red to Bill Higgins, and Higgins with fumbling hand removed a chew of tobacco, slammed it on the floor. He spoke solemnly:

"I reckon this here means me too, now as I'm workin' for the Eighty-Eight. An', Mister La Rue, I'm —— particular who I run from."

Then he took another chew of tobacco and chewed rapidly.

"What is it? What's the matter?" Jane asked from the doorway, where she had stopped, listening. Now she came in, put out her hand for the paper, demanding—

"Let me see."

Buck put the paper behind him and pointed to Juan's body.

"They killed him. This here notice—"

he tore it in two—"warned us to 'spect the same. Yeah."

Jane turned away and sat down weakly. She put her hands to her face but did not cry; she was shivering as if with ague. It seemed such a terrible and cruel world.

VII

BUCK and Red and Higgins went down to the blacksmith shop, found pick and shovel, and up on a hillside they dug a deep hole, for coyotes would have scratched out a shallow one. It was hard long work in the dry stony earth, and not until after dark did they carry up the small form, wrapped about in a blanket, and put it there. In the dark they threw back the dirt, tramping it down, and they worked by the light of a lantern.

CHAPTER VIII

WILD HORSE

THAT night while Red lay on his bunk in the dark trying to sleep he could hear from time to time the faint rustle of a cigaret paper, the scratch of a match, followed by a tiny flame in the darkness as Bill Higgins, also sleepless, lighted another cigaret.

At intervals too he could hear Buck's footsteps alongside the house, and once he had heard Jane call—

"Larry?"

"Yeah?"

"I was afraid it wasn't *you*, Larry."

"Go to sleep, miss. Ever'thing 's quiet an' all right."

"Good night, Larry."

"Good night, miss."

"Don't call me that. I am Jane. Good night, Larry."

"'Night, miss—Jane."

Buck walked away; he was thinking, or trying to. His head was full of thoughts, but they tumbled over one another and he wondered futilely about many things.

Where had that nigger cook gone to? Juan had guided his father somewhere in the hills back of the ranch to wait there, and now there would be no way for Buck to reach him. Windy Mills and his men had undoubtedly killed Juan. That girl Nora there in town? Still she had spoke up very friendly toward Buck Harrison. And just when had she begun to guess that he was Buck.

"She ain't the kind that would turn me up," said Buck. "Not after how I treated her that time. I shore wish the boys would ride in—"

The boys were Bob Elkins, tall and grim, silent; but he had talked enough to let it be known that he counted on going out with his boots on; Soldier Joe, who had deserted from the cavalry—not enough fighting there to suit Joe; Apache Jack, half Indian, cunning as a whole one, nearly as cruel; Pinto Grimes, who carried two Winchesters, seldom used a six-gun; Harry Long, young, range-bred, son of a rustler that had been lynched.

But they had broken away from the leadership of Buck's father; had headed up into Colorado to flag down the Santa Fé; to get one of those treasure-trains that Buck's father suspected of being an armed lure.

Buck shook his head regretfully, reflecting:

"I've got two punchers here an' a range war on my hands. I wonder could ol' Jake Spencer spare me some men if I put it up to him fair an' square. Them droppin' Juan that way means I got to do some settlin' with some fellers. I'll jus' write a note to Jake an' send Higgins back in the mornin'."

II

Buck went into the dining-room and lighted a lantern. Mrs. Allen and Jane had cleaned up the dishes.

"—more 'an that Spencer woman ever done in her whole life, I bet. Mighty nice women, Miz Allen an' that girl."

He had a nubbin of a pencil and a half tablet of paper that he had found in a tin box. Taking plenty of elbow room he wrote. He was more at ease doing many other things than writing, and besides he hardly knew how to put down just what he wanted to say. He curled his legs under the bench, held his head in one hand, frowned, chewed on the pencil, and after many beginnings, wrote:

> mr. Spencer dear sir
>
> Windy Mils an some fellers come over here wile we was to yore place and kiled Juan. I rekon Barly an Cuninham an Saunders was maybe in on it somhow. They kiled Juan an lef werd as how we al womin to was gonabe run off. Like —— we

are. Can you let me hire som of yore men for a spel. The feelin is gettin biger an biger in me that I aint got no rite to this here ranch so if youl help me a litle to get things stratened out I promise to get outa the counteray an take nothin. Im powrful obliged for the way you talked to the girl aboute me.

yores truely
—Buck Boyd

Aboute 4 men wil beanuff if you cant spare none. Id be powerful glad to see you com an bring everbody so we culd ride down on Cuninham.

As he was reading it over, Buck glanced up, listening. With one hand he reached to the lantern, turning it out. With the other he drew a gun. A moment later he was outside the house, peering into the darkness as he listened to the distant hoof beats of a running horse that was heading for the ranch house. He detected at once that this was but a lone horseman coming, and put away the gun, walking some distance from the house, waiting.

A moment later Red and Higgins came with a stumbling rush from the house, Red carrying a Winchester.

"I ain't much account at prayin'," said Red, "but I'm hopin' it 's them comin' back."

"It ain't," said Buck. "It's some feller comin' alone."

"An' —— f'r-leather," said Higgins.

The horseman was riding furiously, coming straight for the house; and as he got near he shot overhead as if the pounding hoofs might not have awakened the ranch.

"Hi-oh there!" Buck sang out.

The hoofs of the horse sent up a shower of dust and gravel as it was pulled down into a sliding stiff-legged stop, and the man in the saddle cried:

"I'm Dodd o' Wild Hoss! Cunnin'ham's grabbed her. Spence is killed an' Lewis shot! I broke through an' come on here. Are *you* La Rue?"

"I am La Rue."

"You goin' fight? You goin' fight 'em?" Dodd cried in eager anger, swinging from the horse, striding right up against Buck, trying to peer at his face in the darkness.

"I reckon—some. Le' 's come to a light. Who are you, an' where's Wild Hoss?"

"You orta know. It's valley range—yourn. Four o' us was runnin' it."

They went into the dining room. The lantern was relighted. Higgins and Red leaned tensely across the table as Dodd, face to face with Buck, told his story:

"Six of 'em, Saunders leadin', rode in on us. We're four. We knowed Slab was foreman o' the Eighty-Eighty though us fellers over there ain't never seen much o' him; an' me, I never had no use f'r him. Still he was foreman. They come friendly, Windy Mills an' others. An' Slab he told us *you* had come. Saunders he said Cunnin'ham had rights to the Eighty-Eight, all of her. Said he had legal rights as was good in court an' had gone to town to show 'em. Said would us boys as was holdin' down Wild Hoss throw in with him agin you. Sim Simpson, the —— said he would. Me, Spence an' Lewis said like ——, that when we was runnin' an outfit for a ranch we didn't sell out to no —— man. Words passed, an' I come out o' the smoke shootin'! I hit the leather o' Slab's own hoss, an' here I am. Yore life it ain't worth a —— if you don't fight 'em—Cunnin'ham has passed the word to git you an' *pronto*. Says you ain't got no right to live. What you goin' do?"

"This here Wild Hoss place—I been away some years y'know. What's there now?"

"She's the best o' the Eighty-Eight. Big little valley—you ort to remember—twenty-odd mile from here 'cross Pico Hills. Lots o' water an' feed. Yore father held it all, ever inch. Six thousand head in there, fat as butter. Jus' a big corral that valley. In the ol' days I hear tell, 't was where rustlers hid out. Yore father he run out the rustlers an' kep' 'er. Now a bigger rustler 'an any o' them has grabbed 'er. What you goin' to do, La Rue?"

"Seven men there now, countin' this Simpson what throwed in with Slab?"

"When I left they was."

"Can we, you an' me," Buck inquired, "get back over there by sun-up?"

"Easy if we start now. By —— us four here can wipe out—"

"Jus' us two goin'," said Buck. "You an' me."

"Two?" cried Dodd. "An' them seven!"

"I reckon. If we can get there 'fore sun-up an' sort a-step through the door 'fore they're expectin' anybody."

"Yore jus' talkin'!" said Dodd angrily. "An' yuh don't mean it. Wantin' to show off. I want to ride f'r a man that fights, not f'r one that talks big an' sets still!"

"Red," said Buck without anger, "hit the saddle an' bring in some hosses. We 're settin' still too long. An' Higgins, you might as well light out for Spencer's now. I've got a letter wrote. Red, he'll stay on here. Won't do to leave the women alone. But if we can get to this Wild Hoss afore sun-up, I reckon I can be back here afore noon, easy, tomorror."

"You mean," said Dodd, beginning to believe, "as how you an me, alone, are goin' ride down on them fellers?"

"That's what I mean. But if you're all wore out an' need some more rest—"

"Careful there, —— yore soul! I don't need no rest, but I got some sense. Us two agin seven—them in a log house an'—"

"Come sun-up, we'll step right inside that log house ourselfs. In the dark I reckon we can get clost enough. Then—"

"See here," said Red, rising up, lifting his voice, "when did I git so decrepit as to be left settin' like a bump on a log? Let Bill here take the women over to Spencer's with him, an' we'll all go to Wild Hoss. Us three agin seven—that'll be about an even break!"

Buck answered:

"Bill goes now, an' he goes fast. You, Red, stay. We know where them *hombres* are, so they ain't much chanct o' them ridin' down on you, but we can't leave the women alone. An' if they do come, you get in the women's room an' make yore stand there. There'll only be two winders to watch, an' that girl I reckon'll load for yuh. Two folks in there c'd keep off an army—though they could get into the bunkhouse an' make a lot o' noise, cussin'. Me an' Dod'll ride."

III

DODD led the way through the darkness; he rode fast and said little. They came to rough ground then entered timber, and climbed slowly. It would take about five hours to get to Wild Horse by pushing hard.

The trail was wide, easily followed; twice a year big bunches of cattle were driven in and out.

"There 's a lot of ol' trails—rustlers used 'em. This is best," said Dodd.

From time to time he would glance searchingly at Buck's shadowed form; and Dodd said to himself:

"He won't go through with it. I bet he *talks* to 'em—if he don't *fight* after draggin' me back into this here I'll plug him first—still he looks good leather somehow—if he does fight I reckon we'll both git burried."

Buck asked—

"Dogs there?"

"Not now, there ain't. Was. But the Wolfer he took his pack over to Spotted Rock—other end o' the valley. 'Bout five mile. He's winterin' there."

"How many men d'you reckon," Buck inquired, "this Cunnin'ham holds?"

"Him? All in this here country as ort a be hung I reckon. He's the kind as likes bein' a ——, Cunnin'ham is. Wouldn't git no joy outta livin' a-tall if he was hones'."

"How's it come," asked Buck, "that he ain't never been hurt none."

"Two reasons, both good uns. Important one is as how he's allus been perticular who he crowded, an' Cunnin'ham he's cunnin'er than Ol' Three Toes. Ever hear o' Ol' Three Toes? No? He was a wolf. No traps, no pizen, nothin' could git him. He hung onto the range f'r years. Nobody c'd git him. Cunnin'ham's like that. What come o' Ol' Three Toes? Shame for to tell yuh. He got injudichous onct an' picked on the wrong long-horn. She druve about five feet o' horn through his heart! An' I'm wonderin', are *you* that kind o' long-horn yoreself? Yeah, she done it. Happens ol' George, yore father hisself, saw her do it—him lookin' acrost from a rise one cold mornin'. He rounded up that there long-horn—him bein' crazy, y'know—put her in a corral an' had us boys packin' in grass for to feed 'er. Rewardin' of her, said ol' George, him bein' loco. Know what she done? She climbed the fence an' went back to hustlin' f'r herself—eatin' cactus an' trottin' twenty mile to water. Reg'lar cowboy's gal, she was. Didn't want no fences 'r restu*rant* life. She was well knowed on the range. Nobody 'd ever throw her into the herd, come the round-up. I allus took my hat off to 'er ever' time we met. We run 'er over to Wild Hoss, where feed it is good an' water plent'ful. She wouldn't stay—comes right back out to sand, sage an' cactus. Some folks I reckon they is like that. They want the open range, an' nobody ridin' herd on 'em. Why, I hear tell that in big cities fellers has to set at desks all day an' other folks has to stand at counters, jus' stand. The other reason Cunnin'ham ain't never been hurt none, personal? He's plumb cautious an' keeps killers for to do his fightin'—"

They rode on and on; then, reining up, Dodd said:

"From here on we'd better go slow.

Sounds they carry. An' a piece farther at the edge o' the timber, we'd better git off an' walk. Now jus' *what* was you meanin' to do?"

"I want to get up to the house an' wait there for sun-up, like I told you."

"How clost?"

"Jus' outside the door," said Buck. "So as soon as she's light enough to see I can step inside an' have a talk."

"*Talk?* What you start to say to them fellers will end up in the ears o' ol' Saint Pete there by the Pearly Gate. You 'll go heaven-high, *pronto*. I thought you was goin' lay off some hundred feet or so an' pick 'em off as they come outta the house. I 'dmire sand but I hate fool'shness. You goin' right up *clost* to the door?"

"I'm countin' on it."

"Well, I ain't never lived no proper life for to die sudden," said Dodd, "but bein' as they is two doors to this bunkhouse, I'll stand by t'other 'n. Only do you mean to shoot, or talk some first?"

"Shoot," said Buck. "After the smoke is cleared away maybe we'll talk some."

They rode on slowly; then Dodd said:

"This is about as clost as we'd better ride. 'Bout a half mile from here."

They dismounted, took off their spurs, loosened the guns in their holsters. In the morning darkness Buck looked down and out across the valley. He could see nothing clearly, only the blurred ragged crest of timbered hills outlined against the starry sky.

"Lead on," he said to Dodd.

"They won't have nobody on the lookout, I don't reckon. Not countin' on nobody comin' back so quick. Still yuh can't tell."

"I find her safe, usual, to do what nobody ain't countin' on yore doin'," said Buck.

"That's near safe—if you're a good guesser," Dodd answered.

They went along down hill, cautiously. There was a movement in the darkness, a propulsive snort.

"Lookout, said Dodd, pulling aside. "Some cattle bedded down over there."

"Le' 's back up an' around."

"Be nice, wouldn't it," Dodd whispered, "f'r them galoots to come outta the house in the mornin' an' find you an' me settin' up in a tree with some long-horns stampin' around, darin' of us to climb down. Yeah. But them cows are butter-fat an' lazy. Still, le' 's go precautious."

They made a wide detour. Luck was with them. The lazy cattle did not come for them as was likely to happen when wild cattle found men on foot.

Presently Buck could make out an object like a solid shadow that he knew was the long low log bunkhouse; and gazing overhead for a time he, from much experience in night-riding, made out that it would be an hour or a little more until dawn; perhaps above an hour and a half because of the mountains that the sun would have to climb.

"There's some rocks over there, clost," said Dodd in a low tone. "We can scrouge in there—wait, cut 'em off from the house when they go down to the corral."

"Won't do. Which side the doors on? An' is it all one big room?"

"Yeah, we're facin' one door. Other'n straight acrost. You goin' do *that?*"

"That's what I come for."

"All right then. You go to one, I'll go to t'other. But mind, there 're seven men in there!"

"They won't be—'bout ten seconds after sun-up. Now I'll go first. You wait about ten minutes—count a thousand. That's the best way for to tell time when you are in a hurry."

Buck slipped forward, crouching. As he neared the house he dropped to his hands and knees, pausing frequently, listening warily lest somebody should be on guard. He had ridden too long with an outlaw gang not to expect, whatever men's weariness and sense of security, that some one would be awake, watchful, on guard.

He went on, cat-cautious, almost cat-eyed, and saw nothing, heard nothing to make him more careful than he was. Near the doorway he could hear snoring, and some one was awake or suffered in his sleep, for there were repeated groans. The door was open. It was pitch dark within.

Buck stood upright against the door, then put the revolver he had been carrying in his hand up under his left arm, muzzle toward his back. He drew the second six-gun and held it in his right hand, then stood motionless. His ears were keen as a cougar's. He heard movement outside the house, some little distance off: it was Dodd, coming too. He had counted as fast as he could, and when he had reached the thousand, had set out so as to be sure to get to his side of the house before trouble started. But Dodd, who had lived an honest life, was not used to noiseless, stealthy creeping, or to the long slow watch for dawn that men might be taken unawares. Yet the scraping of his feet did not disturb anybody.

Buck waited patiently, listening, trying to detect from the snoring and deep breathing how many men were within. The one man groaned repeatedly, and once somebody growled drowsily—

"Shet up, you ——."

With every nerve tense, eyes and ears straining, it was a long watch, even for Buck who had stood many such, though few for a purpose as worthy as this. At last a cold pale gleam of light touched the eastern mountains and seemed to hang there, as if the sun had stopped. Below, the mountain side and valley lay in darkness. There was a chill in the air, and Buck worked his fingers to keep them supple.

Light grew, but it was the cold warmless light of rays reflected glancingly from a sun not yet high enough to shine over the hilltops. It remained dark within the house even after objects became more clear nearby, outside. Buck looked toward the corral, made of logs. He could make out but three horses, yet one, perhaps more, was lying down.

Still the sleepers were not awake. Buck crouched low and peered within. It was too dark yet to see clearly, but he did see against the door across from him the head and shoulders of Shorty Dodd, peering. For an hour Dodd had been wondering anxiously if this La Rue fellow still stood at his post, and had the uneasy thought that perhaps he had backed off, noiselessly, weakening out of fear.

The man who groaned lay on the floor. Buck could not see, but knew from the direction of the sound.

Some one sat up in his bunk, yawning. Bunks creaked. Other men were stirring. They talked drowsily. Buck pressed himself against the wall outside, waiting for just the moment when all would be up, at least sitting up.

"That there blankety blank with his groanin' kep' me 'wake all night," said an irritated voice.

"Yeah. If Slab 'd stayed, he knocked yuh over the head, you blankety blank."

"Think that Dodd got far las' night?"

"No. He was bad hit. He dropped off the hoss some'eres."

"Windy, who's goin' git breakfus—"

Buck, without a word, landed just inside the door, shooting as he came, fanning the hammer.

Oaths burst in surprize, yells went up, some hands reached scramblingly for guns in holsters at the side of bunks, then some of the hands were suddenly tossed upward in abject surrender. Windy Mills discharged his gun once before he died, twice hit; another man sank backward on his bunk like one fallen wearily asleep; a third leaped upward, like a cat shot as it jumps, and fell with a sliding sprawl, and his cocked gun went off from the jar of striking the ground.

As Buck emptied one gun it fell from his hand and the other seemed to jump from under his arm, muzzle pointed at a man's head, and Buck's left hand was poised rigidly just before the cocked hammer, ready to strike the hammer back the instant that it fell.

There had been only five men in the room; three were dead; the other two held their hands as high as they could reach. It was more as if a gust of lead had swept the room than a succession of shots.

There had been really six men in the room, but one, who had been groaning through the night, was Lewis who had been shot down when Spence, himself and Dodd had refused to throw in with Slab Saunders. Lewis' hands and feet were tied.

Dodd stood in the doorway, where he had watched through the smoke. He held his gun; he had not even shot for Buck had begun so abruptly, fired so rapidly, that Dodd, peering into the smoke, had seen only men with arms uplifted or the others falling. Dodd had never seen such shooting, had never heard about such shooting—at least not from any one he believed.

Buck, crouching low, peering up through the smoke, waited, and the cruel half-smile set on his mouth was the smile of a man contemptuously self-confident.

"Where's Saunders?" he asked sharply.

"Went las' night—him, Hart an' another feller that come in over the trail. Who are you?"

"Me? La Rue o' the Eighty-Eight."

"Blankety blank blank Windy there, an' Saunders too! They said you was a four-flusher!"

"Who are you two fellers?" Buck asked.

"Hank Roberts an' Chet French."

"Cunnin'ham men?"

"Was. Not now we ain't!"

"Get on yore pants. Leave yore gun. Climb yore hosses an' ride. I don't care where. But if we meet agin, ever, it won't do yuh no good for to raise yore hands. You hear me!"

Shorty Dodd was bending above the wounded Lewis, cutting the rope from his hands; and Dodd straighted up angrily:

"You ain't goin' let these blank-blanks loose?"

"What you want-a do with them?" Buck asked.

"Tie 'em up an'—an'—"

"An' what? Jus' what? Feed 'em an' watch 'em? No. I'm too busy to monkey with pris'ners."

"They was goin' for to lynch me f'r a rustler," said Lewis. "They killed Spence—"

"Hang a hurt man?" asked Buck, glowering at the two fellows.

"So," said Lewis, "they talked las' night. They plan to run some Cunnin'ham stock in here to Wild Hoss, an' give out we'd been caught rustlin'. Cunnin'ham's to keep the valley."

"He won't get it!" said Buck. "An' I shore wish you fellers hadn't put up yore hands—"

"That talk about lynchin' was jus' to scare him a little," said one of the men anxiously.

"Scare a hurt man, huhn? For two cents worth o' nothin' I'd plug the both o' you, here, now!"

"The reason Windy an' them got Slab an' us to help 'em jump Wild Hoss is cause Cunnin'ham wouldn't let none of 'em come back to his ranch agin till they'd made good agin yuh. An' he held back wages on 'em. They thought Cunnin'ham 'd be mighty pleased to have Wild Hoss. An' he can go to —— for all o' me. I ain't goin' near 'im agin!'

"Nor me!" said the other man hotly.

"You can ride, an' I'm not carin' where you fellers go," said Buck. "Now you git! Dodd, you ride herd on 'em till they hit their saddles an' are makin' dust. An' if they look at you cross-eyed, shoot!"

IV

ALONE with Lewis, Buck stooped to him, asking:—

"Jus' what's the matter, Ol' Hoss? Where you hit?"

"In the leg an' here—" He touched his side.

"Make a hurt man sleep on the floor! Put yore arms 'round my neck. That's it." He raised Lewis, and staggering, lifted him into a bunk.

"Know why Slab Saunders went las' night?" Lewis asked.

"'Cause he's got instinks as warn him when trouble 's comin', I reckon—like some animals."

"No. Him an' some men are goin' to hide out near the home ranch for to drop you! They all talked las' night." Lewis twisted about, with a look of pain on his face. "She shore hurts a little," he said. "Layin' here, I heard 'em talk. Cunnin'ham he's told Slab this here fight agin you had to be sudden an' complete, 'cause the times was past when a range war could be dragged out. Somethin' else he said, too. I don't savvy it. He told Slab, so Slab said, as how *nobody* 'd ever be to blame as shot you—'cause you ain't La Rue."

"I ain't La Rue?" said Buck quickly, staring hard.

"Slab he didn't understand it, quite. That's what Cunnin'ham tol' him. But Cunnin'ham's such a liar his own men don't b'lieve 'im—less they want to."

"Who do they think I am, I'm wonderin'?"

"Don't know," said Lewis. "But Cunnin'ham claims he got a right to the ranch, an' 's goin' a-have 'er."

"Well he ain't!"

Lewis, true son of cowmen, who had chosen to risk death rather than be faithless to the outfit that paid him forty a month and board, clenched his teeth and writhed in suffering.

"Son," said Buck, though Lewis was his own age if not older, "you are one white man, but what am I to do for you? You can't ride, an' I can't stay here. I ain't got no men workin' for me as I can send over to hold this here Wild Hoss in case Cunnin'ham's varmints come agin—"

Lewis squirmed around and raised himself on an elbow; he spoke savagely:

"You git out an' fight 'em! Don't mind about me. Shorty Dodd he can ride down to Spotted Rock an' bring the Wolfer an' his dogs back up here. We'll hold this here camp, come —— 'r high water. Yore the best I ever seen throw a gun, an' you got sand—that's all I ask from the man I'm ridin' for. But when you light out for home, be careful. Slab went over that-away to lay for yuh."

"Wonder we didn't meet 'im, me an' Dodd as he rode over."

"More 'n one trail in an' out. But you git out an' kill 'em—kill 'em like you done here! Like varmints!" said Lewis, who had been born into the code of the fang and claw, code of the old-time range, an honest and merciless code.

"Well, I'll stay here anyhow till Dodd has rode down to Spotted Rock an' back, 'cause you ain't in much shape to argy if fellers come ridin' back."

Shorty Dodd, having with many curses bid the two Cunningham men —— speed, returned to the house.

The night before Windy Mills and his men had scratched a hole and thrown into it the dead Spence, and had felt jubilant that not one of themselves had been hit by a bullet, though Spence, Lewis and Dodd had scarcely had a chance to shoot; but now there was another burial, and Buck and Dodd hurriedly dug graves.

"I don't mind sweatin' f'r my friends," said Dodd, pausing as he grubbed, "but I hate to work for dead varmints. If God He is like them sky-pilots say, why does He let such fellers as Cunnin'ham, Slab Saunders, an' men like that there Buck Harrison an' his killers git borned? Huhn?"

So spoke the rude skeptic of the range, and Buck gave him no answer, but pecked away savagely at the earth.

Dodd rode off, going down to the Wolfer's camp.

The Wolfer was an old haggard lonely man, who, like most varmint hunters, had been in the country a long time, liked the loneliness, and lived in a sort of mysterious aloofness from his fellow men and with a pack of dogs.

Before noon Dodd returned, and soon afterward the Wolfer arrived, on foot, driving two burros packed with his traps and belongings; and with him came a score of mongrels, all cross-breeds, flabby-eared hound dogs, long-tailed short-legged dogs, yellow dogs, and one nondescript terrier, about as big as a tom cat, that trotted at his master's heels. A bear dog, that little wise silent terrier, a hunter of bears; a dog that would yap its head off and make even a grizzly turn and stand at bay until the old Wolfer came and shot the bear. Terrier and Wolfer looked about as much alike as dog and man can resemble each other, and in characteristics were much alike in that they were aloof, quiet except when it was time to make a fight.

The old Wolfer eyed Buck, nodded, said nothing; he eyed the fresh mounds of earth, said nothing; he gazed out over the valley, shifted his .38-.40 from shoulder to crook of elbow, then spoke:

"My work is varmint killin'—man 'r beast, an' nothin' it kin git in a half mile o' us without my dogs carryin' on. An' I cured myself too much from bein' clawed by b'ars an' sech not ter be able to bring Lewis thar whole an' well. That 'll be all I got ter say."

Dodd had rode out and brought in the horses which he and Buck had left up near the timber the night before. Buck mounted and rode off for the home ranch.

CHAPTER IX

JACK BOYD

BUCK approached the ranch house by cutting back through the hills and coming in through the horse pasture. He did this to avoid the chance of being picked off by a Winchester from ambush. Saunders and other men, Lewis had told him, had ridden over this way to lay for him.

He knocked the staples out of a wire fence post, stepped on the wire, led his horse across, then with a rock hammered the staples back into place.

On a hillside in the pasture Buck stopped and looked toward the house. Two saddled horses were there, their reins on the ground, and they stood with an air of lazy dejection. They were far off, but his eyes were keen.

"That big roan looks a powerful lot like a hoss I know," he said hopefully. "If my dad he ain't here to the ranch then somebody has come in on his hoss!" A moment later he said, "That other hoss is the one I seen the Spencer kid hangin' to time I was over there. Wonder what he 's here for? Ol' Jake couldn't a-sent *him* to do no fightin' for me!"

As Buck rode out of the corral and up toward the house he saw his father put aside a Winchester and arise from a box near the kitchen doorway and leisurely walk down to meet him.

"'Lo," said Buck, stopping before his father.

"'Lo," said his father gravely. In his youth Boyd, who had carried many names since then, had been reckless and cheerful, just about like his son now; but year after year he had become more quiet, aloof, taciturn, a man of few words and quick decision.

"I ain't been so glad to see nobody since the time I was corraled in the Valdez calaboose, an' you rode in with the sher'ff's badge an' papers. I'm plumb happy you 've come!"

Boyd nodded slightly, then—

"Juan's dead?"

"Yeah, an' some o' the men as done it have gone over too! ——'s shore busted loose. A feller named Cunnin'ham, who seems to be cahoots with that there Jim Barley, opines to grab this Eighty-Eight, but—"

"You 've been over to Spencer's," Boyd interrupted. "What 's he like, this Jake Spencer?"

"He's who you're thinkin' he might be, I reckon. He took one look at me, black hair an' all, an' he says, 'You 're not La Rue. Who the —— are yuh?'—or words to the same effect. I told him Jack Boyd's son. He warmed up some considerable. There is a Murdock in Perez—"

"Murdock? Yes. He an' Jake were pardners them days." Boyd paused and with level eyes looked out across the hilly country, meditatively. "Jake Spencer," he said quietly, then looked at Buck. "Son, I've told you about the time some drunk soldiers come at me in a saloon onct. Them days I thought the Army was goin' let bygones be bygone on account of a little somethin' me an' the boys had done for some cavalry fellers as was cornered by Injuns an' bad greasers. I wasn't hidin' or ridin'. Some of these drunk soldiers thought they'd get themselves some sort o' big name by takin' me. Jake Spencer he walks over to where I am an' stands on one side. An' Sam Murdock he walks over to where I am an' stands on the other side. An' Jake he speaks up. There's ten to a dozen soldiers, an' they're more sober when Jake's done talkin' than when he started in. Them days Jake was an honest man that 'd never touched a crooked dollar—"

"He ain't yet neither!"

"—an' it wasn't the first good turn he'd done *me*, though I was on the dodge an' purtty bad. I've got a long mem'ry for them as have treated me like a white man."

Buck had seldom heard his father say so much, which went to show that the old outlaw's feelings were stirred. He was silent for a moment, then asked—

"How'd you make out las' night over to Wild Hoss?"

"Who tol' yuh? Red? We made out purtty well, me an' Dodd. There was only five of 'em. Two of them they was able to ride off this mornin'. Where's Red now?"

"Him an' the girl went ridin' a while ago."

"Is this here the Spencer kid's hoss?" Buck asked.

"Yes. He brought you word as how Jake's havin' trouble. The Hammarsmiths, they jumped his water yesterday. The man Higgins he sent back word as how he had to stand by Jake. Said he'd come back soon as he could."

"What's got into this here country!" Buck exclaimed. "Looks like ever'body was a-jumpin' of their neighbors!"

"I'm thinkin' some o' ridin' south," said Boyd. "Jake may be needin' a little help."

"Yeah? Look here, dad. You'd better throw in with your pore little innercent son. He won't grow to much of a ripe ol' age if ever'body goes chasin' off to help Jake Spencer."

Boyd appeared to ponder this remark, but made no reply to it; when he spoke he said—

"Juan not showin' up back where he left me, like he promised, I rode down to see how you was makin' out."

"Didn't Red stop you none?"

"He did. He held a Winchester while I rode in. The girl was by him. I said I was your friend, but he was not goin' to be reasonable till the girl spoke up. She said, 'Mr. Red, can't you tell an honest man when you see him?' Somehow that made me feel queer-like, to have her say it an' *mean* it."

The old outlaw looked out across the land where puffs of wind had begun to whip up the sandy dust like a galloping detachment of horsemen that rode with scurrying swiftness, scouting ahead, before the main windblown army that would soon sweep upon the country.

"I hear," said Buck, "as how the boys have broke away from us an' gone back up to flag down the Sante Fé?"

Boyd nodded but made no more of a reply than that.

Buck and his father went up near the house, sat down together and talked; and when he had finished telling of the things that had happened to him Buck added:

"I reckon if I was sens'ble I'd light out. But I've figgered this here: Cunnin'ham may know I'm not La Rue, like Slab Saunders was a-sayin' over to Wild Hoss, but he don't know *who* I am or he'd a been down on me by this time with ever' man he could raise. An' I ain't a-goin' run—not jus' yet. I'm full o' pizen an' I got to bite! An' no —— man gets this here ranch away from them women!"

Boyd asked quietly, not looking at his son:

"There comes times when ever' man has to decide things for hisself. Me, I'm gettin' old I reckon, an' the feelin' I had that made me 'bad' sort o' went out when old Allen, that called hisself La Rue, dropped there in that Perez hotel. Now with you an' the women on this here ranch, you 've got to figger—is it worth a fight or ain't it?"

"Yeah. It is to me—jus' like it was to you, onct. I've heard my mother tell, so proud she'd cry in talkin', how you, down there in the Strip, throwed in with her dad who was jus' a nester; how you rode an' shot an' stood twenty hours to a loophole, pickin' off them cowmen's killers as had rode down to clean the nester out. That 's me here. Cunnin'ham's killers they stuck a warnin' over Juan's body as how we, women an' all, would have to go. Me, I stay."

"Them twenty hours yore mother stood by, loadin' the guns," said Boyd.

Another long pause followed; then Boyd said:

"I'll be ridin' back up to where I'm campin' an' bring down my pack. I'll be back here in the mornin', early."

"I'll go a piece out with you in case Slab Saunders is hidin' behind a sandhill some-'eres clost. I'll sorta scout around."

The Spencer kid who had been talking with Mrs. Allen came from the house and greeted Buck with a shy eagerness. He explained:

"Sis made me come up here when I wanted to ride with the boys against the Hammarsmiths. Word come they 'd jumped our water yesterday, an' Uncle Jake lit out. Bill Higgins he said to tell you he'd come back just as soon as he could, and he said you would understand why an old Arrowhead man couldn't leave the chance to shoot some Hammarsmiths. Especially, Higgins said, after what that polecat had done to him."

"I un'erstand, but I ain't sympathetic," said Buck. "Not in my fix here, I ain't."

"Sis told me to stay up here with you, but I'm going home," said the kid. "I'm going to ride out and join the men. No woman, even if she is my sister, can stop me!"

"Son, you 're doin' right," said Buck, approving; and the kid swelled visibly.

The way to Spencer's was for some little distance in about the same direction as Boyd was going to his camp; and the three started together, Buck meaning to go but a little distance and look about.

A wind-blown sound faintly reached them, and listening they heard the sound of shooting.

"Over that way," said Boyd, pointing.

"The girl—Red!" Buck cried, and wheeling his horse he struck with spurs and plunged downward around the side of a hill. The Spencer kid dropped behind though he struck with heels and quirt, flopping his arms, but inexpertly bounced about in the saddle.

With a leap that sent pebbles scattering, Buck spurred down into a wide arroyo, following it between the hills; then forcing the horse to climb out he made for the ridge, dismounted near the top, went scrambling on up and from behind a yucca peered across. The sound of shooting was not far off, but no one was in sight.

"Six-shooter agin Winchester!" and turning to his father who was close behind him, asked, "Didn't Red pack a rifle?"

"No. Put it back in the house before he went."

"Then it's him down in the holler jus' over that next hill—there's smoke—"

The smoke of a gun that had shot from a hillside where cactus grew rolled up in a puff. Boyd crouched, ready, watching. As the next puff of smoke went up, disclosing approximately where the marksman lay a quarter of a mile off, Boyd shot, and a man leaped up, instantly running, aware that rescuers had come. His yell of warning to his friends was silenced by Boyd's second shot, and the man dropped. For a few feet he rolled like a thrown dummy on the hillside, then lay like a dummy.

Buck had mounted and now spurred down the hill, but his father rode along the ridge, holding the Winchester like a six-shooter, and twice fired off-hand as distant figures came to view.

The Spencer kid, his horse badly ridden and winded, climbed to the ridge. A far-off figure, beyond range of Boyd's rifle, appeared for a moment on horseback, took a look at what appeared to be a band of rescuers, then galloped off. Boyd presently could see in the distance two horsemen, riding furiously, fleeing.

Down in a gully Buck found Red Clark and the girl. Both of their horses were down, dead. Jane's clothes were torn, her face was bleeding, her hands were bleeding, but there was a wild defiant look in her eyes, and her hands were full of cartridges that she had pulled from Red's loosened belt to hand to him the instant he paused to ram out an empty shell.

"Who says prayin' don't help none!" bawled the irrepressible Red as Buck rode up. "I been sayin', 'O Lord, send somebody as kin shoot, an' do 'er quick'—an' here yuh come!"

Then Red, who did not think it sounded well for some men to curse, swore like a drunken trooper, and no one noticed, least of all Jane, who tried to tell what had happened; but Red cut in:

"We was ridin'—I'm learnin' her. First thing I knowed, there was a shot right past my ear. 'Le's go home!' I says, an' we turned an' rode. *Whang-whang-whang*—her hoss went down an' pitched 'er—see how she's all cut up! The ——! Then I seen there was three fellers an' a comin'. I jumped off an' grabbed her, meanin' to git us both back in the saddle—which they knowed I meant, I reckon. They shot my hoss too. Then we run for it, fell, rolled over a couple o' times, an' landed in this here gully. They yelled we didn't have no chanct, an' would we give up? Yeah, an' I asked her here would we give up an' she said—she said—" he glanced around at Jane, who was still in a kind of angry daze, and very breathless—"it was onct I was glad for to hear a lady cuss! She said, "Like ——!"

"I reckon they thought you was me," Buck suggested. "I don't think even Saunders he would shoot square at a woman—or be such a bad shot as to miss, if he did."

"I don't valyer yore opinion none," Red answered.

II

THE next morning Red Clark was sitting in the shade of a shed and talking to the big black man-killer of a horse which he now claimed for his own. Jane had been riding Trixie, and Saunders, or one of his men, had killed her.

Red was not happy. He had much on his mind. He had slept poorly the night before, or rather had hardly slept at all; and the big part of the trouble was that he had overheard Buck say to the man Boyd there near the gully:

"Dad, jus' as shore as I'm Buck Harrison I'm goin' a-get that Saunders!"

Red had brooded over that ever since, and he was greatly perturbed. But now with the inflection of talking to some one who could understand he talked to the big black horse, saying:

"Un'erstand now that you are the hoss part o' me, the which orta make you plumb proud o' yoreself. I'm jus' as perticular to have a good hoss as you are to have a good rider, you hammer-headed, black-hearted, barr'l-chested hound-haunched ——, you! The which bein' un'erstood, you'd better pack me through —— 'n high water, cause I reckon there's goin' a-be plenty o' both if this here La Rue is Buck Harrison. Gosh a-mighty, what is to be done?"

Presently he looked up and saw Boyd riding in, leading a pack horse.

"It's the Harrisons, dad an' son. He was to come back this mornin' an' here he comes. That girl Nora she had suspicions, an' I orta knowed there was *somethin'* wrong the way he kin shoot!"

Boyd rode by, erect and grim in the saddle, with a Winchester under his leg. The pack horse was not led, but followed. Boyd passed with only the merest nod, though Red said "howdy."

Thereupon Red Clark, who had imbibed an honest mother's milk, and been paddled by an upright sheriff-father, and moreover had the downright instincts of honesty deep within him, sat cross-legged on the ground, rolled one cigaret after another and tried to think. There was no doubt about it. These were the Harrisons; but Buck had made a clean open-handed stand for the girl and her mother.

"No hones' man could a-done better—

couldn't shoot as well," said Red to himself.

"An' me there in town, I talked about Buck Harrison bein' a varmint, an' how I allus took a shot at varmints when I seen 'em. Gosh a-mighty, but he's a wise *hombre* what keeps his danged mouth shet! Why did he go an' hire me after how I talked? He ortn't a-done that. You, you long-legged black-hearted ol' piece o' crow-feed, you, why don't you up an' say somethin' to help a feller, hoss?"

But the powerful black, with meditative dejection, let his ears droop and held his head low.

TO BE CONTINUED

BORDER JUSTICE

by Arthur Woodward

OUR pioneer forefathers were a hardy set, often rude and unlettered, but having nevertheless a true sense of doing the right thing in as nearly as possible the right way. Primitive courts and the court-houses, impromptu lawyers, judges and juries would bring volleys of ridicule upon them from the all too highly polished gentry who frequent such places today, but nevertheless they accomplished their purpose as may be shown in the following illustration.

The first court-house erected in Greene County, Ohio, not far from the present town of Xenia was a simple, one-roomed log house, built by General Benjamin Whiteman. It was constructed in "hog-pen" style; that is, without having the corners mortised. So limited were the accommodations that when the jury retired to the jury room they did so by going outside the court-house and finishing their deliberations in a squat-shaped pole hut to the right of the log hut serving as a court.

The first trial of causes was held in the court-house on Tuesday August 2, 1803, before Judge Francis Dunlavy and Associate Judges William Maxwell, Benjamin Whiteman and James Barret.

Shortly after the first trial for which the jury retired the spectators thinking perhaps that business matters of the court were dragging decided to settle various "affairs," which had been brewing among themselves, in the approved backwoods style. Black eyes, bloody noses and a clearing of the atmosphere of old grudges was the result.

Among the spectators at court was one Owen Davis, owner of a mill, also the first of its kind erected in Greene County, on Beaver Creek, in 1798. Davis, aside from being a miller, was also an Indian fighter and a man who believed in the old adage, "honesty is the best policy."

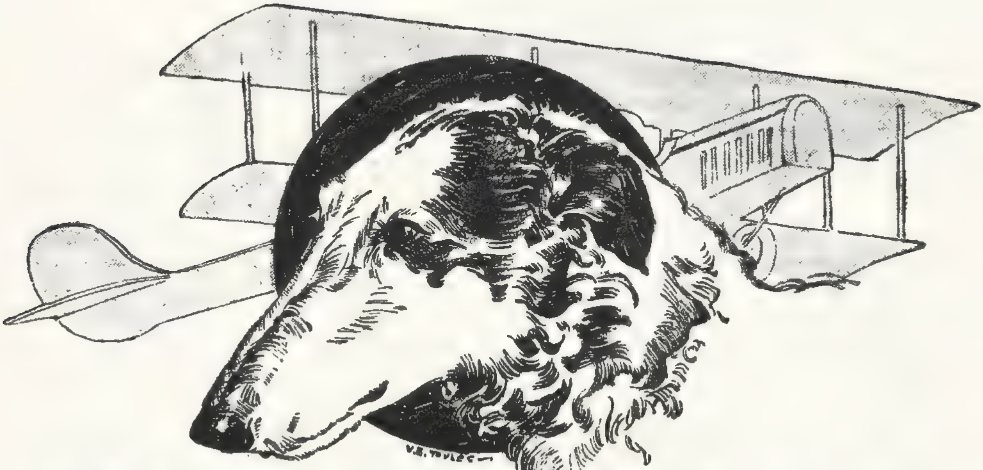
While mingling with the crowd Davis spied a man from Warren County, a visitor at the court and having strong grounds for believing that the man had been "speculating in pork," in other words stealing hogs, charged him with having stolen some of his porkers. The Warren County man denied the charge whereat Davis promptly challenged him and they went at it hammer and tongs. After a brief tussle Davis emerged victorious.

Immediately after the scrimmage Davis walked into the court and planting himself in front of the Judges spoke to Judge Whiteman, saying:

"Well, Ben, I've whipped that —— hog thief. What's the damage, what's to pay?" at the same time slamming down his buckskin purse upon the table. Then he continued, shaking his fist in the judge's face, saying—

"Yes, Ben, and if you'd steal a hog,—— you, I'd whip you too."

It is further related that seventeen witnesses were sworn and sent before the grand jury and nine indictments found the same day, all for cases of assault and battery committed after the court was organized. All parties so indicted pleaded guilty and were fined, Davis among the rest, he being fined eight dollars for his share in the day's "judicial festivities."



ORLICK THE EAGLE

by Kenneth Malcolm Murray

Author of "The Law of the Cossack."

LOOKING up from his breakfast table on the porch of his hunting lodge in Saktlen, Korytowski searched the sky for some sign of the aeroplane whose soft, pulsating drone penetrated the dense forests around him. Flying still held a tremendous appeal to the ex-pilot, but as he reached mechanically for the steaming coffee beside his plate his hand trembled so that it threatened to send the cup spinning from his fingers. He set it down hastily, passing his hand slowly across his eyes.

For days he had found himself listening for the step of the Cossack general, thinking of the situation in which the crafty Bohdan had placed him. Korytowski was, to him, the only available means of establishing an air force of sufficient strength to combat the activities of the Poles, probably the only unattached pilot in the Ukrain; and he had made no idle threat in his promise to trip the younger man into his power. Thus the peace that the seclusion of Saktlen had brought to Korytowski's jangled nerves was irretrievably gone. He could not and would not fly for the Bolsheviki.

The roar of the aeroplane motor grew louder, and Korytowski looked up just in time to see a great spraddle-legged puppy come tumbling down through the air attached to a vivid red and green silk parachute.

"And not a drop to drink in months," sighed the Ukrainian.

He arose and went down on the clearing, rubbing his eyes. Again he looked up. It was true, and it was evident besides that the canine aeronaut was going to land on the long strip of turf that extended from the house down to the river's edge. Acting on a sudden impulse, he sprang forward. But the enormous pup landed square on his chest; locked in a loving embrace they rolled over and over down the hill.

Korytowski swore and dug his heels into the ground, sliding to a stop. He sat up, facing the pup. The pup scrambled on to all fours, slowly, hopefully wagging his tail. Man and dog stared at each other with eyes that were wholly amazed.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the one, catching his breath. "It's a Borzoi! Tyke, have you a name?"

"Wow-uf!" said the dog, struggling against the pull of the wind in the parachute, endeavoring to lick Korytowski's hand.

"That's too short for one of your breed," remarked the man, unsnapping the 'chute hook from the animal's harness, letting the silken affair roll back and collapse against the trees that lined the clearing. "Hello, here's something."

He loosened the string that tied a small roll of paper to one strap of the dog's hunting rig.

At that instant the plane roared by again, the pilot swooping her low, leaning far out of his cockpit to wave his hand. Korytowski recognized the cockade. Ship No. 9 of the Pulaski Squadron.

"That'll be Weber," he muttered, waving the paper.

The pilot again raised his hand as the tiny ship swung away out of sight beyond the trees, making off toward her aerodrome to the west.

"Now what the —— are those fellows up to!" grumbled Korytowski, looking after the plane with longing in his eyes. It was some time since he had flown. Somehow his spine itched to feel the lift and the jump of a sturdy bus once more; and then his fingers began to tremble again, rattling the paper he held.

"Blazes!" he growled, scowling angrily. "Tonight I shall dream of that crash again, bad luck to it!"

He had made his last flight just after the war. For, with many of his countrymen and the Poles from the west, he had been serving with Haller's Army in France; and, though no one had known, his final crash had completely unnerved him, driving him, finally, to the seclusion of his lonely place in Saktlen where, with only old Garberiscz, the *mujik*, his Rusty cat, and Copernicus, the parrot, he planned to end his days; hunting a little, chasing butterflies or dallying with minor aeronautical research, haunted at night by the specter of that last terrific crash when he had climbed up out of the wreck with barely a scratch upon his body but with every nerve shrieking, shattered by the tension of those wild, furious seconds when he had tried and failed to avoid the smash-up, while all the men of his old squadron had taken the air again against the Bolsheviki, flying valiantly that the silver eagle of newly awakened Poland might not be torn to pieces by the red menace from the east.

"Wurruff!"

Korytowski blinked hard and looked down at the pup who stood patiently watching him with a big, slanting pair of liquid brown eyes.

"Ah, Suka—er, no, you're Samiec, aren't you!" he corrected himself, scrutinizing the hound more carefully. "Well, well, we poor humans often make little slips like that with our own pups. But so, forgive me. Now let's see who the blazes you are that you should thus boldly interfere with my breakfast, pouncing down upon me out of the blue, staring me out of all countenance!"

Korytowski unfolded the note. It was hastily scribbled in pencil, obviously written in the air. It read:

> DEAR KORY: I see the Cossacks are in Saktlen. Sorry, but I daren't land. Have to take a chance with the 'chute. Take care of Orlick for us, will you? We picked him up during the retreat from Kiev. His owners were afraid of what the Bolos might do, and they wanted to keep the strain alive at all costs. After much care they had managed to breed back to the pure Gustopsovoy Borzoi, for there were only three or four pure blooded dogs of that type left in existence prior to his arrival. But now the game is getting a bit too hot for us and we are afraid he might get lost in the scramble. So we thought of you.
>
> He's Orlick, the Eagle, out of Sverkai and Tiranka of Radziwillowka, and beyond were Strela and Zanoza, unto Nadmen, the Proud, and Lubim of Perchina. And, old man, we'll have you to know that he is, as you can see, straight through unadulterated Gustopsovoy Borzoi, one of the truly ancient breed. Watch over him and care for him, old fellow. He's a man's dog if ever there was one. He was begat under fire and bred on bullets, he's flown through the starry clouds, and he's a good sport withal. We'll miss him.
>
> As ever,
>
> —WEBER—FOR THE REST.

KORYTOWSKI frowned when he had read the note through. What in the name of all that was good and holy was he going to do with a huge, overgrown beast like that! He wanted peace and quiet. Orlick would undoubtedly prefer much noise and activity. But he couldn't well refuse this, the first request of his old comrades. Perhaps it would not be so hard to get on with Orlick after all. He glanced down at the pup, and Orlick met his gaze squarely and silently.

"Funny boy!" Korytowski reached out and tentatively scratched Orlick between the ears.

Orlick ran out his tongue; his face the picture of expectancy.

"Oh, is that so! Well, it looks as if there was nothing for it but to do the best we can. Come on, pup, let's go up on the porch. I left a cup of delicious coffee to dash out and receive Your Solemness!"

Orlick followed him back to his table and sat down beside him, watching him intently, one ear flipped back over his long head, the other cocked up with all but the uncontrollable tip quite alert.

Korytowski could not help but smile.

"Garberiscz!"

The rugged old peasant appeared at the door.

"Garberiscz, I have a visitor. Could you by any possible chance or art produce, not from your person, but from somewhere in the kitchen, a nice, big, fat, juicy, marrow bone, eh?"

The usually imperturbable *mujik* opened his eyes wide, then caught sight of the dog.

"By the Holy Virgin!" he exclaimed, "I had not thought to see another Psovoy in the land, what with wars and interbreeding—"

"Aeowuf!" yawned Orlick.

"He's hungry," said Korytowski, stifling a chuckle.

Garberiscz snorted, but he went to fetch the bone.

Korytowski glanced down at the dog, and for the life of him he could not help but smile again. The dancing light in Orlick's eyes was too infectious. The man found himself liking him in spite of himself. Perhaps it would not be such a task to take care of him after all. He unfolded the letter and read it again with more care. Certainly the beast was a child of no mean parentage, and the fellows had done well not to try and keep him. An army encampment, especially that part set aside for a pursuit squadron of aviation, was no place for a dog of real worth. Korytowski put down the note to find Garberiscz standing expectantly beside him. Smiling quietly at the old man's interest, he read it aloud to him. And at the end he looked up to find the *mujik's* eyes shining brightly.

"Orlick o' Sverkai and Tiranka—" Garberiscz rolled the names sonorously across his tongue, lingering over each syllable—"Sverkai—Strela—Nadmen. Oh, sir, what a line that is! Not even the mighty Woronzova can boast of such a tree! Orlick, the Eagle. Ah, my lanky puppy." He bent down and turned the dog's long, strong muzzle. "Ah, my mighty hunter, thou hast a heavy weight upon thy shoulders!"

"'Twould seem so indeed," said an unexpected voice, and both men whirled to see Bohdan, the Cossack general of the Bolshevik cavalry, standing in the doorway.

Korytowski paled perceptibly. He had met with Bohdan before.

"Hope you'll pardon my intrusion." The Cossack advanced to the edge of the table, his spur-chains and heavy yataghan tinkling musically.

"Pan Korytowski, you were ordered to appear before the Cheka not long ago, but you saved the life of my Araby mare, quite inadvertently, I believe, and I let you go. But, sir—" he rested one browned hand upon the table, speaking quietly, distinctly—"but sir, I gave you fair warning then that I would keep you under strict surveillance. Now—" His voice grew slightly harsh, cold—"what is the meaning of that cursed aeroplane? Do I find you, a supposed neutral, in communication with the enemy?"

Korytowski looked at the out-thrust jaw, the keen black eyes peering at him from beneath the edge of the jaunty astrakhan, and for a moment his nerves contracted so that he could only shake his head and point to the dog. Orlick had drawn back and was watching the stocky, muscular figure of the slim-waisted Cossack, nose twinkling a little at the horsey smell of the man's boots.

"That's one way to convey messages!" sneered Bohdan. "But isn't he a bit young to trust with such missions?"

"He is no courier," said Korytowski, struggling inwardly to regain his composure. "I have many friends on both sides of this futile invasion. The dog is a gift." He held out Weber's letter.

Bohdan took it, and after a curious look at the pup, read it in detail. When he had finished he held it up to the light, inspected the paper closely, then laid it on the table and read it again.

"You seem to be speaking the truth," he remarked. "But this Orlick! What a fellow he is, to be sure! Will you sell him?"

"Hardly. I but keep him for my friends."

"So? Ah, that is too bad. Come here, you fiend of the wind!" He reached out and caught the pup by the thick scruf. "What a coat! Three inches of drawn wire at the neck. And how old is he?"

"Between six and eight months, I should say."

"*Tchk!* what a courser he'll make. Smoke-gray fading to straw on his feathers! See? He will soon be a beauty, by the gods o' war! Stand up, Eagle. Well, you're almost as strongly tucked up behind as your mother was. I saw her, and your granddaddy and grand-mother, too, years ago."

Korytowski noticed a shrewd, covetous light in the Cossack's eyes as, absorbed, he inspected Orlick, noting the deep-veed chest of him, the rabbit feet, the feathery tail that gave promise of soon sweeping the ground, the long, seemingly endless skull, the powerful jaw, the pointed, questioning face. Orlick's silky ears lay back, the tips crossing behind his well-set head. Bohdan ran his hands down the straight forelegs, feeling the rippling muscles, spanning the length.

"Thirty inches, and he's not full grown!" exclaimed the Cossack. "Why man, he's almost nine hands from nose to tail-tip right now!"

Korytowski nodded, watching the general's growing interest. Gone was all thought of the war and its intrigues; gone was his icy hostility; his intention to force Korytowski into joining his forces set aside; the cruel leader was again a Cossack of the plains, lost in sheer admiration for the perfect specimen of an old hunting courser, a lead Borzoi of the ancient breed.

"I would own this dog," said Bohdan slowly.

Korytowski smiled.

"I'm afraid that can not be."

Bohdan straightened up, looking at him sharply.

"Don't feed him too much," he growled, "and run him at least ten miles every day!" He strode off the porch, across the green, and disappeared among the trees.

Korytowski looked up at Garberiscz who was still standing behind Orlick.

"Beware of that ——," said the old *mujik*, slipping a heavy thong through the ring on Orlick's harness.

THEY built a miniature stable, Korytowski and his man Garberiscz, and they bought horses, all of a color, roan; three from the villagers, and one from the cavalry regiment, a striking, racing, Kirghiz stallion, fit to run with the dog Orlick.

"We will start him on hare and then run him to fox. Perhaps he will turn out a wolfer."

They rode, and Orlick, the Eagle, ran; easily, silently, gracefully ran—long floating strides that carried him skimming away, the riders trailing behind. One day he picked up a hare, a grizzled old, long-legged buck. Orlick gave tongue and tore away, but the buck only grinned, hop-skipping to right and to left, dazing the fleet-footed dog, losing him soon in a bog, Orlick plunged deep in the mire, and it took the combined efforts of a rope and both men to bring him safe to land. Orlick was silent with shame. Master and man sat and talked as they smoked, and it was clear that the Psovoy must wait for that buck or forever hang his head. Korytowski put out his cigaret and, stepping from hummock to hummock, drove out the hare. Orlick was waiting. There was one mad, glorious rush, and the buck was tossed high in the air.

"*Lu-lu-lu-lu*, a kill!" called Garberiscz, and Orlick lay down with a smile.

Again on another day, Orlick tore out for a hare, and a porcupine crossed the trail. Orlick, puppy-like, gave up the chase and endeavored to toss friend quills. It was a lesson he never forgot. When coursing, hold scent, and forever respect old quills! Korytowski and Garberiscz laughed, and tended his poor wounded muzzle.

Then, one day, they beat out a fox, and Orlick was slipped on his trail. High in the air he leapt, sighting his quarry, tearing away like the streak of dawn, skimming low over the ground. But the fox doubled back, trotting along on three legs, seeking to regain his covert. At the critical instant a horseman appeared, Bohdan. Warming at once, the Cossack shouted him off, and Reynard got up on his wind. Orlick was hot and excited, baying his breath away, spending his strength on the fun. Reynard escaped.

"'Tis well," said Bohdan, scorn in his voice. "Keep thy heart and thy tail up, thy head and thy voice down. Save thy wind for the course!"

Slowly, with patience, they taught him, the Cossack appearing now and again, like a mentor of all they did. And Orlick, the Eagle, gave heed, learning and trying to learn. His muscles grew hard, and his belly thin, and the coat of him smoked in the wind.

Back in the cabin one night, Korytowski and Garberiszc sat with their pipes. Orlick lay quiet by the fire, his long muzzle upon his long paws, dreaming dreams.

"Shall we run him on wolf?"

"One dog, alone, on a wolf? Nay, it is too much to ask!"

"He is big."

"So is wolf!"

For long they were silent. Tobacco was fragrant upon the night air.

"Perhaps," ventured Garberiscz, "if it were a very small wolf—"

THE next morning early Korytowski was out.

"Just run him today," he suggested, saddling the Kirghiz. "I'm going to look for a wolf."

South into the forest he rode. Then, leaving his mount, he climbed high in a tree, settling himself in a crotch, unslinging his glasses, watching silently along the river bank hour on hour.

Orlick was free at the cabin, sniffing around at the loam. Garberiscz was alone in the stable, grooming his mare. Two gray-coated figures slipped along through the trees, working noiselessly toward the lodge. At the edge of the clearing they halted. Two Mongols, Bohdan's men.

Garberiscz was chanting an air, happy that his master was happy; singing a *mujik* song:

"By the steppes in Hindustan
Lived a mighty, warrior Khan,
And his wives and his dogs were many—"

Bang! The door shut upon him, the lock snicked. Garberiscz was a prisoner.

"—— the wind!" he muttered.

Then he stopped. The door would not give to his hand. He threw his weight against it and heard the lock rattle on the outside. Puzzled, he put his ear to the crack and listened. Orlick was growling savagely. Somebody was talking in a strange tongue. There was a scuffle, a curse, and the hound's bark changed to a dismal howl.

"Muzzled!"

Garberiscz was furious at the thought. Then he listened. The stamp of horses, the clinking of bit-chains sounded on the wood's path. Then all was silent save for the howling of Orlick, growing more and more faint in the distance.

Garberiscz siezed an iron bar and a small hand-sledge and soon managed to pry off a board from the back of the shed. Squeezing through, he ran round to the front, but there was no one in sight. Only the endless trees of the forest and the little path that wound away toward the village. Going back to the stable, he smashed the lock with a mighty blow of the sledge, swung open the door and ran to the nearest animal. Without stopping for a saddle, he dragged her into the open, sprang upon her back and galloped away down the path.

KORYTOWSKI had seen a slim gray form slink down to the river bank and, without waiting for further indications, he had slid down the tree, mounted and ridden home, well pleased with having found a wolf for Orlick.

But when he rode into the clearing by his lodge and saw the open door of the stable, the shattered lock lying upon the deeply hoof-marked ground, his elation died away. Through the front door of the house he heard the noisy voice of Copernicus, the parrot, swearing violently. Evidently he sensed some excitement. Frowning, Korytowski dismounted and was just about to call out for Garberiscz when he caught the drumming of a galloping horse and turned to see the old peasant come racing up the path.

"Ho! Thank God you are here!" cried the *mujik*, pulling up and sliding to the ground.

"Eh? What's up?"

"Orlick, he's been stolen!" exclaimed Garberiscz, nodding vigorously.

"Orlick—stolen!" Korytowski stared incredulously.

"Aye, the Cossacks, they've stolen Orlick!"

Then, breathlessly, the old man poured out what he knew of the theft. Yet as he spoke, Korytowski's puzzled expression only increased.

"But it is not possible," he cried when Garberiscz had stopped. "Who in Saktlen would steal Orlick? Our Orlick! I cannot believe it. He has just wandered off, that's it, he's just gone hunting!"

"Nay, master—" Garberiscz repeated the events as he knew them— "he has been stolen from us. The Cossacks—"

"Oh, then—" Korytowski's face brightened a little— "then it was just some of the cavalrymen. I—I'll go tell Bohdan. He'll see that Orlick is returned to us. Great Father, but he will be furious when he finds out that it was one of his own men!"

"Nay, nay, master! Do you not hear what I say! The cavalry regiment has drawn stakes. They ride north to join their main body and begin the great march on Warsaw. Bohdan rides at their head, and Orlick is tied to his saddle-tree!"

"Blood of a cholera dog!"

"Aye, master, it is true! Last night the cavalrymen fought amongst themselves and made bets, Mongols and Cossacks. And the people of Saktlen watched them respectfully and listened. Many of the words were useless curses, but some were not. More than one heard them boast of the ride that would take them west to the Muscovite Road, and thence northward through Tarnopol, Brody and Luck unto the gates of Warsaw which they claimed they would carry in the first assault!"

"Bah! Warsaw can take care of itself. Two-thirds of the whole Polish Army is there to protect it. But Orlick, what will become of him?"

Korytowski had not realized until that moment how great a part Orlick had come to play in his life. Now that the dog was gone, he found an amazingly great ache in his heart. An old friend had been taken away, and the loss disconcerted him more than he would have believed possible. Those long rides, swift in the dawn-light, they had taken him out of himself; made him forget the one thing that had broken his life, that crash; had given him a life anew. Bohdan, despite his abrupt appearances, had lost most of his menace. Orlick had opened the long pent flood gates of Korytowski's heart, giving an unbounded love, asking nothing for the gift, as is the way with a dog. And the man, unaware of having been lonely, had given his heart in return. He knew that now!

"Do not frown so, master, we will get Orlick. We will saddle fresh horses at once and ride after that devil-man Bohdan!"

Korytowski raised his head. Yes—no!

"Garberiscz, are you crazy? Those tribesmen do not march like proper cavalry. They move like the wind of a summer's day. Who could follow them through the mountains and forests that lie in their path? As well chase a will-o'-the-wisp!"

"But, sir, we can not forsake Orlick!"

"Aye, we might actually overtake them. And then what? We are two and they are two thousand! Then what? Yes, the more I think about it, the surer I am that we could overtake them. Bohdan will see to that! Ah, he is clever, that Cossack!"

Kortytowski sat down abruptly on the porch steps. His hand had begun to tremble as he rubbed it over his eyes; rubbed as though to clear away the pale haze that was before him.

"But master—"

"Oh, Garberiscz, don't you understand? Don't you see what he has done! You remember the time he called me before the Cheka, don't you, Garberiscz? When he tried to force me to work with his air squadrons to put them in some sort of flying shape and—and fly with them? You do? Well, see now what he is doing. He covets the dog and he covets what he is pleased to term my knowledge of the air. See, Garberiscz? He knows that we will at least make some attempt to recover Orlick. We have to, or what would Weber and the others think? Besides, we can't leave that dog in such hands! But look you, the first move I make will be sufficient grounds to cause my arrest, and then I shall again have the alternative of joining his air force, against my friends, or facing the Cheka, and you know what that means, Garberiscz!"

"Aye, well enough, the Cheka!"

"I can not fly for him, Garberiscz. You know why!" cried Korytowski, hastily lighting a cigaret.

"No, no, of course you can not, master. But what of Orlick?"

"I—I don't know."

"But please, sir, we must do something!"

"Yes, yes, of course. But what, Garberiscz? What can we do? Some of Bohdan's men may be watching us right this minute. It would be like him, Bohdan, just like him."

Korytowski slowly twisted his fingers together—a stark, yellow fear was in his heart.

Garberiscz saw it and looked away. He knew the condition of his master's nerves, and how they had come to be that way, and not for an instant did his faith in the man desert him.

"Perhaps—if we tell Pan Weber and the other officers, perhaps they would help us," suggested the *mujik*.

"Admit that we have lost Orlick? Garberiscz!" Korytowski was getting hold of himself a little.

"Aye, they admitted that they were afraid of losing him. It is no disgrace. It was not our fault. Surely they would help us."

"H'm, they might, they might—" Korytowski was silent for a moment, thinking—"Yes, of course they would—only, what a rotter they'll think me! No matter, we must get Orlick back again, somehow. Let me think."

FOR a full minute neither man spoke. Then Korytowski arose and went into the house, Garberiscz close at his heels.

Going directly to his desk, the Ukrainian pulled out a drawer and extracted a sheaf of old German flying maps, oil-smeared and cracked, but accurate to the tiniest detail. Running through them, he picked out one and spread it upon the table.

"There, sir," exclaimed Garberiscz, pointing a stubby forefinger to the line that wound north out of Saktlen, "that is the road he is following!"

Korytowski glanced at the clock; it lacked but an hour of noon. He thought for a moment, then measured off some nine inches on the chart.

"Allowing for the turns in the road, he will rest there tonight." He pointed to the hamlet of Antonowka. "And, knowing him for the man-driver he is, he will surely be in the saddle an hour or more before dawn." He measured again. "The squadron is stationed at Kamieniec Podolski. That's just a little over forty miles to the west. Good lord, Garberiscz, look here, Bohdan will be somewhere to the north of Tarnopol by daylight tomorrow, and if he once gets into those forests there we never would be able to find him! Saddle me a fresh horse, Garberiscz, hurry! I ride to Kamieniec at once!"

The old *mujik* needed no second bidding, but ran to the stable and, unsaddling the Kirghiz, threw the girth over a fresh horse, snapped it tight, forced the bit between the sharp teeth and set the buckle-tongue in the head-strap. In less than five minutes the new mount was ready, standing nervously by the door. Korytowski came out and swung himself into the saddle. Garberiscz eyed him sharply.

"Won't you even carry a pistol, sir?" he exclaimed, seeing that his master was entirely unarmed.

Korytowski, his face a shade paler than usual, smiled grimly. "What's the use, Garberiscz?" He held his hand our stiffly. The fingers trembled visibly. "See? I couldn't hit a house if I were locked in one! Besides, an armed man is fair game, but even a Cossack will hesitate before he shoots at an unarmed person."

"All Bolsheviks are not Cossacks," grumbled the *mujik*.

"No matter. I do not intend to give them much chance to shoot at me. I travel light. Good-by," he added, swinging his horse toward the forest path.

"God be with you!" called Garberiscz, watching him anxiously.

KAMIENIEC Podolski lay to the west and a trifle south, and seven deep, swiftly flowing rivers intervened. By nightfall, striking straight out across the open country, Korytowski had crossed six of them and a branch of the seventh, the Muksza. Soon he came to the banks of the mother stream. A great red moon was slipping up behind the trees, and far away between the dark trunks glimmered the bivouac fires of a party of Cossacks who were guarding the ford. For Kamieniec was less than five miles beyond the far shore.

"——!" muttered Korytowski, shivering a little in the chill night mist that rose from the river.

Clucking softly to his horse, he urged him into the stream, and the tired little pony struck out valiantly for the opposite shore. The water was icy, and jagged rocks cut the surface of the black, silver-shot current into swirls and eddies. Halfway over, he slipped out of the saddle and towed alongside, clinging to the blanket straps.

Eventually the horse's feet struck bottom and he floundered to the bank, making a prodigious noise. Korytowski glanced fearfully about as he hastily led the dripping animal into the shelter of a little patch of woods. But all seemed quiet save for the gentle talking of the water along the shore, murmuring around the rocks.

A narrow clearing led away between the trees, past two or three deserted huts once used by charcoal-burners. It was well within the district covered by the besiegers of the tiny city, but Korytowski mounted and rode on, moving carefully to avoid the moonlit patches, keeping within the lurking shadows. Partly from the cold and partly from the strain of keeping constantly on the alert, he began to tremble violently. It was not so much the fear of being caught, as it was the effort he was making to avoid it that played upon his high-strung nerves, making his hands shake, his face twitch—reminiscent of that last aeroplane crash. He shuddered when he thought of it.

"I'd give all the aeroplanes in the world for a smoke!" he muttered.

Soon the trees came to an end, and he found himself on the edge of a broad plain, beyond which lay the aerodrome of the squadron and the few twinkling lights of Kamieniec.

Korytowski drew a deep breath and, after a sharp glance around, started across the open. But he had not gone far when, from off to his right, there came the tinkle of accoutrements and the sound of six or eight men singing an old Cossack cavalry trotting song, rollicking and gay, to keep up their spirits during the long night watch. An irresistible impulse to run swept over him and, driving home his spurs, he tore away across the moon-flooded plain, heading straight for the distant lights. At once the song ceased; no sound penetrating the rush of the wind in his ears save the steady throb of his pony's flickering feet. But he did not stop until a voice from the Polish pickets cried "Halt!" and he dragged down to a slower pace as two Polish cavalrymen ranged alongside and presented their saber-points at his throat.

"Aye, aye, give way. I am a friend with news of the enemy. Take me to the officers of the aviation squadron. They know me."

The little building used as the officers mess by the pilots stood near at hand and, seeing that their captive was alone and unarmed, the guardsmen complied, riding up and calling outside the place.

"What now!" exclaimed an officer, opening the door and peering out.

"Weber!" cried Korytowski, greatly relieved.

"Why Kory, old boy, what brings you here, and how the —— did you get through?"

"Tell these men who I am so that I can climb down and come in where it's warm, will you? I have some bad news for you, but I got soaked in the Muksza awhile back, and I'm about frozen!"

Weber instantly vouched for him, bidding the men take his horse back to the stables with them.

"Rub him down, feed him and give him a blanket," ordered the pilot.

The soldiers saluted.

A FEW minutes later, attired in an old uniform lent him by Weber Korytowski sat drinking hot coffee by the fire, explaining the silent manner in which Bohdan and his men had slipped away to ride north to join the Bolshevik forces that were already tightening in on Warsaw.

"H'm, cavalry won't be much use to them up there," said Weber. "Thanks very much for the information just the same, we'll pass it on through the proper channels and all that. But tell me, Kory, how did you find out all this? We always thought you were strictly neutral!"

"Yes, I was," said Korytowski, quietly, "until you sent me Orlick. But since then I've, well, he and I got to be pretty good friends, you see, and now, oh, pshaw, I don't know just how to tell you all, but that Cossack-devil Bohdan also took a fancy to Orlick, and today when his outfit started north, he stole the pup and took him along! That's what I really came to tell you, and I guess you fellows picked the wrong man to trust with such a valuable dog, " he added, endeavoring to smile.

"Like thunder we did!" cried Weber. "The wrong man wouldn't have ridden through the blockade that surrounds Kamieniec on this night!"

At that moment, Major Rajski, the Commander of the squadron, came in, curious as to why every one was up and the lights burning at that hour of the night.

"Hello Kory," he exclaimed, catching sight of the Ukrainian. "What's going on? A family reunion? Glad to see you again, anyhow."

He shook hands warmly, while the other pilots explained their old comrade's sudden appearance.

"Orlick has been stolen!" cried Rajski, when he heard what they were saying.

"Yes, and Bohdan is on his way to join the Bolo forces outside Warsaw!"

"Oh bother that. Warsaw can take care of itself! The thing that interests us is how we are going to get Orlick back. We can't let the best mascot we've ever had be stolen from us as easy as all that!"

"Why," said Weber, easily, "we'll just jazz out, catch up with that regiment, swoop down, pick him up, and come home with him!"

"Sounds as if you were going to fly a horse instead of a ship," said Rajski.

"Oh, of course with all the squadron there, it—"

"That's just the trouble. General Ivaskadar, in command of things here in Kamieniec, told me only just this evening that he wanted every available ship ready to follow up a sortie he's going to make first thing in the morning. We're going to have another try at breaking the siege!"

For a moment no one spoke. This was the event, long dreamed of, but forgotten entirely in the excitement about Orlick.

"Well, look here," said Weber, "I think my idea's not so —— crazy after all. If a whole flight of us went it would only give the game away. What we should do is to literally make a sudden, swooping raid out of it, and any more than one or two ships would give those sharp-eared Cossacks warning and spoil the surprize. Now if Kory here would go, there's a spare ship in my hangar—and surely you could spare me—that would only be one man out of tomorrow's work. I think we could do it. What do you say, Rajski?"

"H'm, guess we've got to try something like that," said the commander thoughtfully, "and one ship more or less wouldn't make a great deal of difference."

Weber let out a whoop of delight, but Korytowski's heart sank down to his boots. A sudden chill contracted his throat. It had not occurred to him that he might be called upon to fly again.

"Come on!" cried Weber, catching him by the arm and dragging him out of the room, down along the line of hangars. "It's less than an hour to dawn right now. We'd better get our ships out, gassed up and ready. We don't want that regiment to get into those woods north of Tarnopol. Never could find 'em if they did!"

"I—I'm all out of practise," said Korytowski, quite out of breath at the pace Weber was pulling him along. "I haven't been up in ages," he added, torn between a real desire to take the air once more and the fear of another crash. "Still, we've got to do something about the pup."

His fingers and toes grew icy cold as he pictured himself climbing into a ship once again.

"You're right, we've got to make a try for old Orlick, and listen, Kory, it won't take you long to get back the feel of the air!" Weber hastened to give the order for the extra ship. For, like the others, he had wondered at Korytowski's sudden lack of interest in flying, but he had never even considered that he might have lost his nerve; his record in France had been too good.

"Wait here a second," he said, coming out of the hangar. "I've got an extra helmet and a pair of goggles in my trunk."

And he ran off toward his quarters.

When he returned, Korytowski was fidgeting around the spare ship that had been rolled out on the field by the mechanics who were filling her tanks and the ammunition feeds of the machine-guns.

"I've never flown a Balila before," muttered the Ukrainian.

"Haven't you? Then you've got a pleasant surprize ahead. She's a little heavy. You've got to take care not to spin too close to the ground, but she's got two hundred and twenty horse-power in that Spa motor, and that's about twice as much as she needs. She'll step out at around a hundred and fifty-five, climb like a fool, and out-maneuver the new D7 Fokkers any day in the week. You'll like her, old man."

Weber enthusiastically explained the various features of the swift little scout, showing him, with much pride, the clips—designed by the pilots themselves—to hold two twelve-kilo bombs, one on each under-carriage strut.

"She handles like a bat out o' —— on a spree!" he shouted, trying to make himself heard above the roar of the sputtering motors warming up on the dead-line.

Korytowski fingered the soft leather helmet Weber handed him. He found himself listening carefully to the even chugging of the ships, smelling the smell of hot oil and burnt gas, thrilling to the atmosphere of the 'drome once more. But his face shone deathly pale in the darkness.

"Have a smoke!" shouted Weber, offering him a cigaret.

Korytowski accepted quickly, but walked away and lit it with his back toward his friend to hide the trembling of his hands. His body was icy cold, yet clammy with sweat.

"——, I can't do it," he kept muttering as he walked slowly around the ship, automatically falling into the old manner of inspecting each strut and wire.

"She's a good tight old 'bus," called Weber, "only I'd be a little careful stunting her. The tail-end is narrow and apt to twist somewhat in a fast roll."

Stunt her! thought Korytowski. Good ——, he'd be exceedingly lucky if he could get up guts enough even to fly her!

"There's an extra parachute in the hangar if you want it," Weber went on, "but it's an old Freidricshafen rig and, as Rajski says, 'that kind merely puts on the brakes for a heroic death,' so I wouldn't be bothered with it if I were you!"

"Um," grunted Korytowski, moistening his lips.

"Well, you'd better climb in and see how she goes. It'll be getting light soon."

Fumblingly, hesitatingly, Korytowski climbed into the cockpit of the Balila, nervously feeling around for the ends of the safety belt.

"Here you are," shouted Weber, reaching in by the seat. "She used to have a shoulder strap rig, but Bacinski, he's dead now, he tore it out and put in this English belt. It's a lot better, too, don't you think so?"

"Y—yes."

"Well, there you are. Tighten it up more if you like. Now you better open her up a bit. Want her good and warm on a morning like this."

SHAKILY Korytowski opened the throttle. The heavy motor choked once, then roared up to fifteen hundred revs per minute. He hastily shut her down.

"Sounds good, doesn't it?" grinned Weber. "Now listen, Kory, we'll jazz along high up until we spot that column, then we'll beat it away and land somewhere out of sight. Then we can decide what to do next. You lead."

"No, thanks. You know this country better than I do!" interrupted Korytowski.

"All right, just as you say. It's getting light now. We'd better hop off. Don't hug my tail too close if you think you might be rough on the stick. She's pretty sensitive, and there'll be more light when we get up a little—"

Korytowski nodded, his jaws tightly clamped together. In the first gray haze of the morning he saw Weber walk over and climb into the next ship; saw him busy with his belt, then adjusting his goggles. Korytowski trembled violently, his nerves keeping time with the heavy vibrations of his throttled motor. He noticed with a start that Weber was holding his hand up; the mechanics were rocking the ships to loosen the wedges that held the wheels—the blocks came away, and the men stepped back. Weber's hand dropped; his motor spoke up stronger and stronger, rising to a high sing-song drone. The little ship started forward and went racing away down the field, its exhaust fanning a long blur of lavender flame out the starboard side.

Korytowski's breath came in little jerks; a sickening nausea settled in the pit of his stomach. Suddenly his arm shot out, and convulsively grasping the throttle he shoved it wide open, automatically advancing the spark-lever with his thumb. At once the motor roared into life and the tiny ship started ahead, her tail bucking softly as it rose from the ground. Korytowski sucked in a deep breath. For one terrific moment his nerves threatened to engulf him. Then, with every jar, he was beating them down. Their twitching grew less. The rumble of the wheels abruptly ceased, gracefully the little scout took the air, Korytowski relaxing the grip of his left hand on the cowl as the ground fell away. The tense fingers of his right hand ceased choking the control-stick that moved between his knees; the pressure of his feet on the rudder-bar, in danger of snapping it, eased up. He sat back, inhaling the fresh morning air as, applying a little stick and a little rudder, she rose in a long easy virage, spiralling up to meet the pink-gold of the dawn—five thousand feet above the earth.

Weber signaled and swung away toward the north; the first rays of the sun, still invisible to those on the ground, glinted on the surface of his taut wings, throwing a rainbow halo around the whirling tips of his propellor, shining in a fairy spectrum in the mist sucked out of the dewy air.

Korytowski, elated with the victory he had won over his fears, tried a vertical bank, to follow off after Weber. At once a blast of cold air struck the side of his face. He was side-slipping fiercely. Jerking her level again, his heart thumping hard, he held to his course more sedately, cursing himself for awakening his nerves again, watching the misty ground.

Far below, like a thread of creamy silk, appearing in broken bits through the night mists below, ran the road; the Muscovite

Highroad of old. The two men, boring steadily along through the smooth, cool air, scanned its length and the fields on each side. And twenty-five minutes later, sixty miles out, they sighted a little brown worm, Bohdan and his two thousand men, moving slowly along.

Weber dipped one wing and throttled his motor. Korytowski did the same. The sudden silence, for a moment, was oppressive. Then the soft moan of the wind through the wires of the 'planes asserted itself as both ships glided off in a wide turn, sinking rapidly down into the mists. Almost at once they were out of sight of the horsemen, some five miles ahead on their path. A little way beyond lay a long narrow field adjoining the road but screened on two sides by an L-shaped row of trees. Weber held up his hand, and with a touch of his throttle, eased ahead and landed smoothly on the hard ground, Korytowski following soon after. They at once taxied close to the trees that hid them from the road, and leaving their motors throttled to the lowest notch, climbed out and ran back to the tails of their ships, lifting them around in readiness for a quick take-off.

"Listen," said Weber, wiping the oil from his goggles, "it seems to me that if we wait until the head of the column is abreast of these trees, we may be able to jump out, grab the dog, and make a quick rush back here and get off—"

"Sounds kind of risky," said Korytowski, taking the proffered smoke. "But Orlick knows my whistle, and if he's not leashed too tightly—"

"That's the idea!" exclaimed Weber. "Now take a good look at this field. You won't get much time to judge distances once you've got your hands on the dog. It'll be a case of give 'er th' gun, get 'er tail up an' go! I'll keep close till you get clear," he added.

Now that he was back on the ground, Korytowski noticed his nerves starting to jerk again. But he managed to smile, though somewhat grimly, as he surveyed the narrow field. At the end, beyond the smooth stretch on which they had landed, lay a wheat field covered with knee-high grain, and farther on was another open stretch bounded on the far side by a split-rail fence.

"Guess we'll get off before we get into that grain," he muttered, biting his lips.

"Oh lord, yes, there's plenty of room here if you open her up wide," said Weber. "Come on, let's have a look at the road."

They put out their cigarets and, working their way as quietly as possible through the trees, peered cautiously up the road. There was nothing in sight. But they had not long to wait before the head of the regiment swung round the bend, and Korytowski could see the grayish-yellow patch that was Orlick, trotting along beside one of the foremost horses.

"Careful!" he whispered, "here they come!"

Both men slipped farther back among the trees.

"Listen Weber, you go back and get into your ship. Wait till you see me coming, then give her the gun and get off."

Weber started to demur.

"No, do as I tell you. Once you get in the air you can do more good with your machine-guns than as if you were a whole regiment on the ground! Quick now."

He pushed him away and turned back toward the road.

SOON he caught sight of the column again, and crouching low behind the thick trunk of a gnarled old cedar, waited anxiously. In another minute he could hear the sound of horses' hoofs, the jingle of accoutrements and bit-chains, the squeak of leather on leather. A little dusty puff of wind brought the smell of sweaty men and animals, the pungent odors of gun-oil and saddle soap. Korytowski squinted through the trees. The men were talking and laughing as they rode along. And Orlick, his coat dirty and unkempt, his tongue drooling from the corner of his mouth, ran along beside Bohdan, a leather thong fastened to the ring on his hunting harness, the other end hanging from the Cossack's hand.

Korytowski whistled softly.

Orlick closed his mouth and raised his head, one ear cocked aloft.

Korytowski whistled again.

Orlick looked his way.

Korytowski stepped out from behind the tree, at the same instant calling sharply. Orlick made one bound, the leash jerked, he was free, racing eagerly toward his master.

Bohdan caught sight of the man, whirled his horse and drew his saber, a single curse exploding through his teeth.

"Come on, Orlick, old boy!" shouted Korytowski, turning and making a dash for his ship.

The dog was close at his side, and sweeping him up in his arms, he thrust him into the cockpit and climbed in after him. Weber saw him safely aboard, then opened his motor and took off in a cloud of smoke just as Korytowski slammed open his throttle. For the Cossacks had recovered from their first surprize and were charging through the trees, each rider lying flat on his horse's back to avoid the low-hanging limbs.

Korytowski's motor roared aloud for an instant, then back-fired once or twice and died down. He groaned. The engine was choked with oil from having idled too long and then being thrown wide open. Frantically he worked with the motor controls, but to no avail.

"I tried, Orlick, old man, I tried," he gasped, his fingers shaking so that he could only fumble the handles.

Abruptly the motor picked up a little, and the 'plane began to move—not fast enough to make her take the air, but just enough to keep ahead of the Cossacks who burst out of the woods and came yelling and whooping toward him, their long sabers flickering ominously in the morning sunlight. Korytowski opened his throttle wide, but he did not know that a broad ditch surrounded the grain field ahead until, with a terrific jar, he hit the cut amid a shower of mud and water, and tore into the growing wheat like a high-power threshing machine.

Weber had gained a few hundred feet by then, and wondering what had happened to Korytowski, he turned and dove at the Cossacks, both his guns spitting a leaden stream. But the dive was necessarily short, and he was over their heads and by before he could do much damage. Two of the tribesmen had crashed from their saddles, and a horse had fallen, pitching his rider a dozen yards. Weber did a vertical bank with his wing-tip brushing the grass, and tore back at them.

Korytowski was fighting desperately to prevent his ship from turning over on her back, for the soft ground and the high wheat made a heavy pull on the undercarriage. Beyond the grain he could see the second ditch, and it seemed to have exceedingly grave-like proportions. Somehow he managed to hold her down until the last instant, and then, with a mighty pull on the control-stick, he zoomed her as high as possible.

She cleared, but still being without power enough to hold the air she dropped down with such force on the level ground beyond that the port wheel caved under. The Cossacks were close behind, but at that instant the motor picked up strong, and Korytowski, Orlick and all crashed headlong through the fence.

For a moment all detail was lost in a cloud of splinters and dust, and then on the other side the Cossacks gasped to see the little ship stagger up into the air with a ten-foot fence-rail jammed crosswise between the tubular steel struts of the undercarriage.

Bohdan and his men drew rein where they stood in the middle of the torn up wheat field. Weber circled wonderingly overhead, watching the other ship anxiously. Suddenly Bohdan drew his pistol and began firing with careful precision, his men following the action with their carbines.

Korytowski was aiding his machine with every ounce of skill he possessed. He heard the droning whine of bullets, and ducked his head involuntarily, glancing at Orlick who sat crowded against the side of the cockpit with the rush of the wind sleeking down the hair on his powerful muzzle.

A long narrow rip suddenly appeared in the left lower wing.

"Hit!" groaned the pilot.

But he held to his course straight away from the field, fearful of trying to maneuver the dangerously strained machine.

Weber veered by close at hand, diving back to cover the other's retreat. And the shaggy little Cossack ponies again scattered like frightened cats when they saw the great mechanical bird come roaring straight for them, both its guns cracking viciously. But after a moment of utter confusion the wild riders recovered and began sending up volley after volley, stung into action by the lash of Bohdan's thunderous curses.

Suddenly Weber bethought himself of the two little twenty-five pound bombs with which each of the ships in the squadron were equipped. Circling back into position, he let them both go, one after the other. There was a deep moaning sound as the long slim missiles gathered speed, followed by two terrific detonations, two great fountains of dry dirt, men and horses, and

Weber put his controls hard over, hastening off after Korytowski who was slowly easing his limping 'plane back toward Kamieniec.

Just under a half hour later they were within sight of the town, and through the smoke of a heavy fire in the forests to the eastward they could see that the tiny city's besiegers were being routed. Kamieniec was free at last, and its defenders free to go north to aid in the final, smashing battle of Warsaw, the battle that was destined to victoriously end the war.

Weber throttled his motor and glided in to an easy landing, taxiing immediately to one side to make room for Korytowski who was settling slowly, his motor switched off entirely to avoid the risk of fire when he crashed. For a crash was inevitable, with nothing but a wrecked undercarriage on which to land. Korytowski knew it, and he knew that it was the one thing he feared more than death itself.

His lips were moving in an endless string of silent curses as he tensely watched the approaching ground. Orlick was looking at him with those big, slanting brown eyes of his; and at the last instant Korytowski caught hold of his harness to keep him from being flung forward when they hit. Then he jerked hard on the stick and kicked the rudder-bar. The nose of the ship rose a trifle, and she skidded to a sudden, slithering crash.

Before Weber could run to him, Korytowski came climbing up out of the wreckage, dragging a surprized but jubilant pup along with him. Clear of the mess, he turned abruptly and sat down hard on the remains of the wing, suddenly aware that his nerves were almost as calm as though nothing had happened. Incredulous, he extended a rigid hand, palm downward, eyeing it sharply. It was as steady as a rock. He had proved that he could go through another bad crash without harm, and his one great fear had left him.

Orlick, the Eagle, came close and, sitting before him, extended a slim, graceful paw. Korytowski took it gravely in his hand—man and dog, staring at each other with eyes that understood, each in his own way, the thankfulness in the eyes of the other.

WHEN KIT CARSON WENT TO WASHINGTON

by F. W. Hodge

KIT CARSON, the greatest of all the scouts and guides, made his first trip to Washington as a bearer of dispatches at a time when travel through the wilderness was a hazardous undertaking indeed.

Starting from Los Angeles in March, 1847, with a very small party for the purpose of carrying dispatches to the Navy Department, Carson found the usual difficulties increased from the fact that he was accompanied by Lieut. E. F. Beale, who was so ill and weak that it became necessary to lift him on and off his horse during most of the journey, and indeed Carson doubted whether Beale would survive until the journey's end.

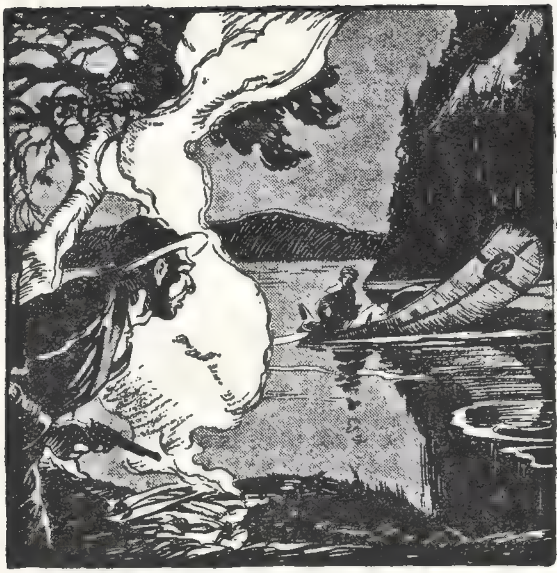
Only one trouble was experienced with Indians on the trip eastward, when a band of Apaches on the Gila River attacked the party one night.

Arrived in Washington, after journeying nearly 4,000 miles in three months, Carson was met by Jessie Benton Frémont, daughter of Thomas H. Benton, Senator from Missouri, at whose home he was hospitably entertained while at the capital, for Carson was the intimate friend and frontier companion of John C. Frémont during many a hard and trying experience.

Beale set out with Carson on the return trip, but was compelled to abandon it at St. Louis on account of ill health. Reaching Fort Leavenworth, fifty men were assigned Carson as an escort, which accompanied him as far as Santa Fé, where he hired sixteen men for the rest of the journey.

At the Point of Rocks on the Santa Fé trail the party was attacked by a Comanche war-party, and on the Muddy River, a branch of the Virgen in Utah, a band of 300 Indians in threatening mood, were dispersed only after it became necessary to kill one and wound a few as an example.

During the rest of the trip the only food was the flesh of two mules. And yet Carson regarded such privations as a trivial incident compared with previous adventures.



THE KING of MATABANICK

A Complete Novelette

by

Leslie McFarlane

Author of "An Imposter," "The Black Suit," etc.

THE fire had burned low. It stared from the shore like a scarlet eye out over the smooth, black water. The moon had gone down and the sky was dark, merging with the massed pines which towered gloomily from the river banks.

The infinite, overwhelming silence of the wilderness was sharply broken by a sound. It was faint and far away, but clear in the night stillness, and it brought the sleeper to his feet. He had been lying in the shadows, wrapped in his blankets, and he rose into the dim aura of firelight like a sudden fantom. He peered into the darkness intently. Then he heard the sound again. It was a thud, scarcely audible, the touch of wood against wood, and it was followed by a light splash, the *drip-drip* of water. The man started violently.

He reached to the ground beside his blankets and grasped a revolver lying there and then moved swiftly, silently, like a cat, until he was crouched beyond the fire. There he could see without being seen, and there was no betraying silhouette against the glow. He moved not a muscle, but crouched, rigid, alert, and his eyes searched the profound blackness of the river. Water lapped against the rocks on the shore. The man watched and waited.

He was powerful of build, and his shadowy figure was like a crouching statue, roughly hewn. He was swarthy and of crude features; he was heavy of jaw, and his under lip was pendulous. Thick, black brows shaded his narrow, snapping eyes, and his forehead was low, with bristly, short hair above. His hair was so short, so stiff and stubbly that the blunt contour of his skull was accentuated, and one would imagine that his head had been shaved not long ago. His ears were heavy and close to his skull, his neck was short and thick. He had wide, heavy shoulders, arms unnaturally long and huge hands, giving an effect almost simian, and which, with his dull, stupid and brutal face, rendered him primitive, almost bestial in appearance so that, as he stared into the darkness, he was like an ugly, black animal.

The faint thud, the light dripping of water, inconsequential sounds in themselves, told him a story. They told him that some one was approaching the campfire, paddling cautiously in toward shore. Who it might be he did not know, but he was a hunted man and he had no intention of being taken unawares. When he heard the light splash of water again, he reached quietly behind him for a stick of cedar, and this stick he placed carefully on the fire, then withdrew farther into the shadows.

The flames caught the stick; it crackled, and after a while the dying blaze revived and rose higher, so that the circle of firelight extended. It even cast a ruddy, rippling reflection out over the water and, in this glow on the inky river he had a fleeting glimpse of the side of a canoe which disappeared swiftly into the darkness again with a white gleam from the stern.

But the canoe did not go away. He knew that. He could see nothing, but he sensed that the canoe was lingering there like a shy and curious animal, just outside the radiance, and that the occupant was, like himself, searching the darkness with keen eyes. He made a sudden decision and spoke loudly—

"Who are you?"

His tones were accentuated by the mournful silence of the night, and echoes boomed from the river. The man flung himself swiftly to one side and lay flat on the ground, but there was no shot. Instead an answer—

"Who are you?"

It was like another echo. He heard a faint splash and a swirl of waters, and he sensed that the other man, like himself, had moved quickly, to glide from the path of any bullet that might be sent in the direction of his voice.

The short-haired man was reassured. They would not act like this. The canoeist might be a friend, and he needed friends. He would chance it.

"If you're the police, stay away, for I've got you covered."

His voice was low and steady. He flung himself to one side again with the agility of a rabbit.

A sigh. A sigh from the darkness. A sigh of relief.

"I'm a friend."

Like an apparition rising from the water, the canoe glided into the firelight, boldly, swiftly, and drew up by the shore. He saw a figure step lightly out as a paddle clattered; he heard the craft grate upon the pebbles as it was drawn up a little way on shore and then he saw the other man advance toward the fire.

The short-haired man did not move. He kept the revolver leveled cautiously, and he saw that the stranger also grasped a weapon. They faced each other thus for a moment, like two strange dogs, and then, apparently satisfied, the man behind the fire nodded and rose to his feet.

"Can't be too careful," he growled.

The other lowered his gun.

"I thought you might be a Mounty."

There was a wealth of introduction in this remark. They faced each other in grave scrutiny. The newcomer was a tall man with a white and haggard face, the whiteness intensified by a black beard, and he continually darted nervous little glances about him, as if not yet altogether confident of his safety. Like the man of the fire, he was bareheaded and roughly clad, but his clothes were torn, his hands were calloused and blackened and he seemed very tired. The short-haired man waved him to a seat beside the fire and then sprawled on his blankets again.

"You don't want to meet 'em either," he observed in his heavy, sullen voice.

There was much meaning and an interrogative inflection in the "either." They were now fully introduced as fugitives, as outcasts, as hunted men, and as such, linked by a common bond. The haggard man slouched despondently by the fire, staring into the flames. His eyelids flickered.

"Are there any near?"

"There was a redcoat on my trail comin' up the railway," said the short-haired man indifferently. "I lost him at Cochrane. Two days ago. He might have picked it up since then. I dunno. If he did, he's still a good ways behind. Is there any police down river?"

The haggard one nervously caressed his unkempt beard.

"One," he replied. "Right behind me at dark."

THE other tapped at a stick of wood with the barrel of his revolver. His thick lips tightened. The flickering blaze cast a gigantic shadow of his figure into the trees.

"Where's he stationed regular?" he asked.

"Lost Beaver. It's a trading post twenty miles down."

"Ain't there no other Mounties, then, beyond?"

"Not in the fur country. Once in a while they go through, but there's no other stations until away north."

"Any tradin' posts?"

The short-haired man asked this with a fine pretence of unconcern, but his heavy fingers tightened a little and he peered at the other man from under knitted brows.

"Not organized."

"How d'you mean?"

"After you hit Lost Beaver you'll be goin' into John Glenn's country."

The short-haired man nodded, and the darkness hid any expression that may have crossed his face. Then he poked at the fire.

"And who's John Glenn?" he inquired, idly.

The haggard man raised his eyebrows in surprize.

"Never heard o' him?" he asked. "He's a big man, independent trader." He waved a lank arm expressively toward the north, shrouded in blackness and silence. "He just about runs things in all the country north of Lost Beaver."

"How come?"

"He's a big man, I tell you. He's king down there. The Indians are scared of him. He's got a tradin' post at Matabanick and he runs all that country. Regular king!"

The haggard man wagged his head in admiration.

The short-haired fellow attempted to conceal his interest. He had come a long way and this was the first man he had met who could tell him anything about John Glenn.

"He's a fur trader, you say?" he asked, as if moved by merely an idle curiosity.

"On his own hook. He won't let the companies come in. The Indians used to bring their furs up to Lost Beaver, but they don't no more, now. He come in there twelve years ago and built his own tradin' post. Built his own tradin' post, y'understand." He stared challengingly at the other to emphasize the importance of this feat. "Not many can do that and get away with it. But he did. They tried to drive him out, but they couldn't do it. He beat 'em every turn. Buys furs from the Indians and sends 'em outside to be sold. It takes a big man to do that. He's a king."

He gazed reflectively into the fire and went on:

"Somepin' queer about him, though. Not many's ever seen him. Lives to himself. Stays up there by himself all the time. Never comes out. Mystery about him."

The short-haired man smiled, grimly.

"I see. A good place to hide?"

The haggard man laughed.

"If it was, I'd be there now. He won't let nobody into his country. You can pass down-river, sure. He can't stop that. But he won't help you. He'll hinder. You can't get guides. His Indians won't do nothin' for you and other Indians are scared to go there. This fellow Glenn, he don't like white men, See? And he keeps 'em out. Some men have tried to go up there and trade. They didn't get nothin' for the Indians stuck to Glenn. Two men got beat up bad when they tried to cut in on his territory. He beat 'em up. They came crawlin' back to Lost Beaver on foot, eat half to death by flies, half starved, both of 'em near dead. They learnt their lesson, I tell you. Not many white fellows went into Glenn's country after that."

The haggard man looked at the other suspiciously for a moment and continued:

"You're not thinkin' of goin' up there, are you, friend? Better not. When you hit Lost Beaver, go across country to the other river, but don't go into Glenn's country. You won't be the first he's chased out. He don't like white men."

"He'll like me," said the short-haired man.

The haggard fellow, after making as if to speak, shrugged his shoulders again. It was none of his business. He had given his warning. If this convict fool—he had drawn swift conclusions from the short hair—chose to seek refuge in John Glenn's country, it was his own funeral. The haggard man had his own concerns. He peered anxiously down the river, his fingers twitching nervously.

"You'd best be on your way," said the man of the fire, noticing his anxiety. "I'll take care of the Mounty."

There was a sinister note in his voice, and the other man turned in alarm.

"You won't—"

"No," growled the other, answering the unspoken question. "I'll just put him off your trail. He's not likely to know about me."

"He's at Lost Beaver most all the time. How long since they been after you?"

"Two weeks."

"He won't know."

"All right. I'll tell him you set your canoe adrift and cut into the bush." The short-haired man put the revolver in his belt. "Be on your way. Got enough grub?"

"Enough to last. Will I meet any one chasin' you?"

"Not unless he's picked up the trail again. It's fifty-fifty with us, though. He won't know you're wanted. Put him off my track."

This excellent arrangement having been effected, they bestirred themselves. The haggard man rose from beside the fire and strode down toward the canoe. The other followed, and watched him drag the craft into the water, take his place in the stern and push out into the river with a flash of the paddle.

"Tell him I cut across the portage to the lake," came the voice of the departing fugitive.

"He won't follow you," growled the man on the shore.

A silence, then the voice from the darkness again.

"It's none of my business, friend, but I wouldn't go into Glenn's country if I were you."

"Thanks."

Silence again. The paddle thumped against the gunwale. The dim shape of the canoe was hidden in the darkness. There were no farewells.

The short-haired man went back to the fire and crouched there again. It was June, and the night was cold. Once in a while he roused himself and put more wood on the blaze. Once he examined his revolver carefully.

THIS name, as attested by police circulars and records covering a period of years, was Sam Gregory, alias Green, alias Giles, etc., etc., but in his own world, peopled by the opposing forces of law and crime, he was known as "Spike," a cognomen which seemed to have an obscure and poetic appropriateness when one considered his blunt, ugly visage, his burly, brutal form and his general impression of truculent strength. He had escaped from a penitentiary a fortnight previous due to some outside cooperation, some judicious bribery and the circumstance of having been called to police court to testify in the case of a former comrade, now unhappily in the toils.

His picture was now displayed in every police station on the continent, his description had been spread broadcast. His capture, the newspapers confidently announced, was but a matter of a few hours, yet here he was, on a northern Ontario river, bound for the forbidden kingdom of John Glenn. The warnings of the haggard man did not trouble him for he knew the mystery enshrouding the king of Matabanick and, whether white men were welcome there or not, he was determined to seek refuge in Glenn's domain.

Time passed, and then came a faint sound from down the river by the narrows. Spike had been dozing, but he straightened up swiftly at the sound and gazed out over the water. It was nearing dawn, for the sky was faintly lucent, and against it the mass of the forest was silhouetted with greater clarity. The river could be seen dimly, leaden in the gloom.

He crawled noiselessly from behind the fire, up through the undergrowth, wet with dew and finally came out upon a white rock some distance down the shore, a rock which overlooked the river. Here he lay flat and gazed out over the water, the revolver before him.

The mounted policeman in pursuit of the haggard fellow, the mounted policeman stationed at Lost Beaver was drawing near. Matters, he considered, had played into his hands very neatly. Here he was, nearing John Glenn's country, and John Glenn was a king in this wilderness, however formidable his isolation. And here was the one obstacle between himself and that asylum—a red-coated officer, paddling up river in the early morning! What more could he ask? His yellowed teeth were bared in a grimace which may have been meant for a smile. His swarthy forehead wrinkled as he gazed out over the river.

For two weeks he had journeyed, seeking John Glenn's domain in this northern bush, shaking off his pursuers, and now there was but this one constable barring the way to the obscurity he sought. It was characteristic of him that he had decided, without the slightest compunction, that removal of the constable was necessary as a final safeguard. He could let the man go by, but if the officer returned to Lost Beaver later on, some one, sooner or later, was bound to tell him of a stranger who had gone down river; he was bound to find some trace, he was certain to hear of a new white man in Glenn's country and there would be investigation. This would be fatal. A new constable in his place, however, would not so easily pick up these loose threads.

He could hear the dip of the paddle in the water faintly, for the officer paddled with a minimum of noise; there was no betraying thump of paddle against gunwale, only the scarcely perceptible splash as water dripped from the blade. At last he could see the shape of the canoe out on the river. It was glowing brightly, but not too brightly—like a fire neglected, and he bared his teeth again as he saw the canoe turn toward the blaze.

Nearer and nearer. The canoe took on form now, and he could see the regular gleam of the paddle. Then he could make out the dim figure in the stern.

So, lying on the rock, like a predatory animal, the short-haired man watched the Mounty from Lost Beaver draw near the shore, lured by the flame like a moth. He saw the canoe swing to one side and glide silently toward an overhanging clump of bushes, a few yards up the shore. He saw the constable test the depth of the water with his paddle; he saw him lash the craft to an overhanging tree; and then he saw him slip waist deep into the water, creep up on the shore and commence to worm his way along the shore toward the fire.

The officer had drawn his revolver before he left the canoe, and he carried this, ready for instant action, as he crept down the shore. The short-haired man had expected all this, wherefore he had taken the position he did. The constable drew near the rock. He was only a few feet away. Spike shifted the revolver slightly; he took careful aim; he pulled the trigger.

The revolver roared in the stillness.

The constable whirled to one side, staring upward, and Spike could distinguish the startled expression upon his bronzed young face. He had been wounded, but he was able to fling the revolver up, and his surprized gaze swept the rock, swiftly searching for the hidden enemy. Spike wasted no time. He fired again just as the constable's revolver barked.

The shots crashed in unison. Tremendous echoes rolled from the trees, rolled across the river, coughing and crashing, and then came the screeching of startled birds and the sudden flapping of wings.

The constable pitched forward on his face, moved convulsively for a moment and then lay still.

Spike lay quietly, having flung himself sidewise on the rock with his characteristic movement and, after a while, he peeped down on to the beach again. The constable lay there, his scarlet tunic giving a gaudy note of color to the gray shore. There was a widening stain of blood.

The killer came down from the rock heavily, in indifferent triumph. He went over to the dead man, looked at the still form impassively, prodded the constable in the ribs with his foot, then knelt and turned him over. Yes, the man was dead. He did not concern himself with him any longer, although he shuffled about for a while, eradicating the outline of his own footprints in the sand. With satisfaction he reflected that the haggard man would be blamed for the crime and would be unable to prove otherwise. Any story he told of a short-haired stranger camped on the shore would not be believed. But that was the haggard man's lookout, and if he hanged for it, that would be a tribute to Spike's cleverness.

As for himself, he had removed the last obstacle on his way to John Glenn's domain. He had left no trail, and now he would invade the kingdom of Matabanick where white men were not welcome.

The river was calm in the early morning and the sky was flaming with pink clouds when he paddled away from the scene of his crime. The great masses of trees were green and solemn above the cool, smoky water, but he had no eye for the beauty of the daybreak, and only once did he look back. He could see a great white rock and, at the foot, a little splotch of color, the scarlet of the dead man's tunic.

II

WHATEVER the respect the name of Matabanick imbued in the minds of white men on its boundaries, whatever the stories told of this mysterious trading post in the heart of the wilderness, the place was commonplace enough. On this June day there was but a wide clearing on the sloping bank of the river, a clearing hemmed in by towering trees and populated by an untidy score of tents and huts, with a large log building with a broad verandah in the centre. The wide river flowed past the slim, white birches at the bend, down past the clearing, past the scattering of tents and huts, into the great forest again. A solemn barricade of trees stood green and silent, heavy and motionless on the opposite shore. Indian children played about the huts, squaws waddled about, a few braves were in evidence, idling in the sunlight.

In the office of the trading post sat John Glenn, the feared, respected and now almost legendary figure who had carved for himself a kingdom out of this wilderness and had held it for twelve years against all comers. Facing him was the one man who had ever dared to dispute his kingship from within Matabanick. This was an Indian, Tom Squirrel, who would have been chief of the tribe, had Glenn countenanced such a thing in his domain. Tall, wiry, of slender build, he stood tensely before his master, his lean face a heavily creased mask, the color of mahogany, his ink black eyes devoid of light or expression.

"Tom Squirrel," said Glenn heavily, "you are a bad Indian. You are trying to make trouble again."

He was a big man, this ruler of Matabanick, clean-shaven, square of jaw, with cold, blue eyes. He had thick, black hair, and he was darkly tanned. Tom Squirrel stood straight, motionless, staring directly at him in somber abeyance. Glenn radiated virility and strength; there were lines of determination about his firm mouth; he was the physical embodiment of force that would brook no opposition, and his broad shoulders and powerful build gave the key to his kingship of might in that mighty wilderness. One could not look at him without feeling something of the force of his personality, without realizing something of the invincible will which possessed his powerful body, and as Tom Squirrel withstood his calm scrutiny for a few moments, he wavered and then shuffled his feet and looked away.

Glenn, satisfied, moved forward in his chair a trifle and went on.

"You've been telling the Indians to disobey me," he proceeded in Squirrel's own language which he spoke well.

Tom Squirrel grunted and shook his head sullenly in denial.

"I say you are!"

Glenn's hairy right arm descended upon the table, his fist closed.

"You've been making trouble here for a long time," went on the trader sternly. "Lately you've become bolder. You want to be chief. You want to have me driven away from here. That's what you've been aiming for, and unless you get some sense into your head pretty soon, you're going to collect more trouble than you ever bargained for. You've been telling the others that you can defy me and that I can not do anything about it. You've been trying to persuade them to fall in with you and take this place for themselves. You!" He laughed contemptuously at the Indian before him. "You'll never be chief, Tom Squirrel. Never, as long as I am at Matabanick. Get rid of that idea. If you want to be a chief, move away. Move away to some other part of the country out of my sight. See how many Indians will go with you."

He spoke with the confidence of one who knows his own power, and then he turned his chair so that his back was to Tom Squirrel and looked out the window. He continued speaking:

"You brought furs up the river last week. You went away from here and told me you were going to the mountains for a few days. Instead of that you brought furs up to Lost Beaver to the company store. Where you got those furs, I don't know. Probably hid them away last winter."

"No," lied Tom Squirrel.

He could not imagine how the white man had discovered his trickery. He had been assured of secrecy. He shuffled nervously, and his brown fingers trembled.

"Yes," contradicted Glenn with finality, turning slightly in the chair so that his smooth, determined jaw was visible in outline. "What did you get for them?"

Tom Squirrel shook his head and mumbled obstinate denials.

Glenn answered his own question:

"You got a new knife for one thing. And you got a silk thingumajig for that woman of yours."

Tom Squirrel did not answer. The case against him was too complete even for denials. It was the woman, he reflected bitterly. She had shown that silk thingumajig to the other squaws. Women always talked too much. Privately he planned the fine beating he would give her when Glenn let him go.

There was a clatter. He looked at the desk. There lay the knife which Glenn had tossed carelessly back. Tom Squirrel had missed the knife just that morning, and he wondered despairingly how it had come into the white man's possession.

"There it is," snapped Glenn. "It's yours isn't it? I don't keep knives like that at

Matabanick. And if you didn't get it from me, where did you get it? Where else but at Lost Beaver?"

Tom Squirrel blinked at the knife on the table. Glenn, looking out the window, had detected a movement in the clearing, a stirring among the Indians there, and he leaned forward. Youngsters were running about, dogs were barking, and he could see two or three squaws in a group, pointing up the river. He wondered what was causing this excitement, but went on, abstractedly.

"Just for that," he proceeded to Tom Squirrel, "I am not going to pay you for the next furs you bring in. You will make up the value of those you sold at Lost Beaver. And if you ever go up there again without my orders, I'll shoot you the minute you come back. And stop this nonsense of yours among the Indians. I'm boss around here."

There was no anger in his voice, but his tones were stern and implacable.

"Now get out," he commanded, dismissing the matter.

He gazed out the window more intently. To his surprize, he saw that there was a strange canoe on the river with a single figure. Strange canoes were not often seen at Matabanick. Once in a while a white man, more daring that usual, would go down the river, but he usually gave the trading post a wide berth, for it was known all along the stream that white men or strange Indians were not wanted at Matabanick. But this canoe was coming in toward shore, and Glenn's look of surprize gave way to gathering anger.

SUDDENLY he became aware that Tom Squirrel had not left the room. In the glass of the window a movement had caught his eye, and he focussesd his gaze to catch the reflection of the room behind him. He smiled bitterly. He could see Tom Squirrel's obscure figure as the Indian made a quick, stealthy movement forward and seized the knife on the table. There was a moment of indecision, and then he saw the figure glide swiftly toward him.

He shifted sidewise in his chair too rapidly for Tom Squirrel. The Indian went crashing headlong in his plunge, fell over the chair, and brought up against the wall, knife still in hand. Glenn leaped upon him.

He grabbed the Indian by the collar of his shirt, then reached down, wrenching the knife from his grasp.

"You would?" he said grimly. "You would, eh?"

But Tom Squirrel was desperate now; he realized that he could expect little mercy after his attempt on Glenn's life, and he fought back. His sinewy hands flashed to Glenn's throat and he clung there like a bulldog.

Glenn was taken aback by the ferocity of this assault. It was the first time in his régime at Matabanick that his power had been actively disputed, but after his first surprize he gathered himself together and fought to shake the Indian off.

Tom Squirrel was incredibly wiry and strong, however; his fingers were like steel, digging into Glenn's throat, and he wrapped his long legs about the trader, swaying back and forth until he caught Glenn off his balance, and together they rolled on the floor. The knife clattered into a corner.

Powerful as he was, Glenn could not break away from those clutching fingers at his throat, and he struck out savagely at the redskin's face. Fierce, smashing blows they were, and in a moment Tom Squirrel's visage was bruised and bleeding, but he did not relinquish his death grip. The trader was strangling, his ruddy face began to turn blue, his eyes were staring. With all his great strength he struggled to wrest himself away from Tom Squirrel, pounding him mercilessly, the blows growing feebler, however, but to no avail for the fingers did not relax.

He groped for the knife, but it was some distance away. His face was distorted with agony, he fought desperately for escape, but all the while the bleeding, gasping Indian clung like a limpet.

Then came an interruption.

A heavy foot appeared from nowhere and settled upon Tom Squirrel's face. Cruelly, heavily it trod upon him with terrible, grinding force, until the Indian's mouth opened like the mouth of a dying fish and he groaned with pain and his grasp on Glenn's throat relaxed as he flung back his hands, trying to push away the foot which crushed him.

Glenn rose unsteadily to his feet, rubbing at his throat, taking deep breaths. In the excitement of the attack he had forgotten about the strange canoe drawing up at the landing, and now that he realized the source of this timely intervention, he flashed back to his old mood of resentment against the intruder.

"Looks as if I just come in time," growled Spike indifferently.

He turned to look at Tom Squirrel, writhing on the floor, and removed his foot. The Indian, dazed, struggled to his knees, crawled toward the door and then scuttled outside.

Tom Squirrel was glad enough to escape with his life. For a moment he thought he had ended Glenn's régime at Matabanick, thought he had regained his lost chieftainship, for he knew the trader had been near death, but fate had been with the white man.

Tom Squirrel knew that all pretences were over, that Matabanick was not big enough to hold both him and John Glenn. For the time being he had been defeated, and he knew that in a little while the trader would order him away. But the arrival of this white stranger would give him time to play his last card. He hastened down into the clearing and disappeared into his tent.

And back in the office of the trading post Glenn confronted the cruel, villainous stranger who had broken in on his wilderness kingdom, the man who had "criminal" written in every lineament of his swarthy countenance.

Had he but known it, forces were gathered which threatened his kingship of Matabanick from two sides.

III

"HOW did you get here?" asked Glenn shortly, without welcome.

Spike showed his yellow teeth and rubbed his jaw with a calloused hand.

"You're Glenn, ain't you?" he said.

"I'm Glenn. What of it?"

Spike put his hands on his hips. His feet were planted firmly apart, and he gave an impression of brutal defiance.

"I've come to stay wit' you for a while," he said.

"I never invite white men here. You can't stay."

Spike did not appear surprized.

"Mebbe you better wait till you hear what I got to say first."

"You can have nothing to interest me."

"Mebbe—mebbe," said Spike softly. "Whitey Whiteman—"

Glenn started. The movement was slight and instantly controlled, but it was not missed by the other.

"What is your name?"

"My name? My name is—aw, well, it don't matter." He waved it away. "Call me Spike. It's a nickname I have. Just Spike."

He strode over to a chair and sat down. Deliberately he tilted it back against the wall, spat on the floor and stared at Glenn with a greasy grin.

Glenn stiffened.

"No white men ever come here," he said. "No white men are ever wanted."

Spike seemed to be paying no attention. He had turned his chair slightly and was looking out the window over the unkempt clearing, over the river, to the ragged line of tree tops across the great stream.

"I was speakin' about Whitey Whiteman," he said softly. "Me and Whitey was pretty good pals, see? We was both in stir. That," he added, by way of explanation, "is where I just come from."

"So I noticed."

Spike rubbed the top of his shorn head ruefully.

"This guy Whiteman," he continued, "died a few months ago. He used to tell me about you. Only he didn't call you Glenn. You had another name when he knew you."

Spike talked slowly, with tantalizing deliberation, and then leaned back, grinning defiantly at the trader.

"And what did he have to say?" Glenn's voice was cool, but it was plain that he spoke with an effort.

"Well, now," drawled Spike, "Whitey had a lot to say. Quite a lot. He was tellin' me one day about a mix-up in Montreal. It was a killin'—"

"Not uncommon in Montreal."

"Well, mebbe not. But this was big stuff, see? Political. One of the big boys got bumped off. His secretary had a row wit' him just the day before. Mebbe wanted his share in some crooked deals 'at was goin' on—"

"You liar!" shouted Glenn, clenching his fists and stepping forward. "I didn't—"

Spike ignored the instinctive outburst and proceeded lazily.

"Well, anyway, no matter what the row

was about, the big fella was bumped off. They pinched the secretary and he got away."

There was a long silence. Spike glanced up and said finally—

"Get me?"

Glenn's voice was tired.

"Oh, I understand you. And you know the truth as well as I do. Whitey Whiteman and his gang did the killing. Under orders. They framed me!" His voice rose. "They framed me! They knew I'd quarrelled with him. I'd stumbled on some of his crooked work and he was afraid I'd tell. I quit him. I told him I'd never work for him any more. Whiteman and his crowd saw their chance, and they killed him and hung it on me. I got away."

"Lucky for you. They'd 'a hanged you."

"I came up here. Hunted from pillar to post. My picture in every newspaper, in every police station in the country."

Spike waved a hard hand eloquently toward the clearing, the wide clearing along the shore with its huts, its tents, with the canoes along the river.

"You ain't done bad, Mr. Glenn."

"No, it hasn't been bad," declared Glenn proudly. "I took this country for myself. I made it my own. I drove white men out of it, for you can't trust people, and somebody would have found out sooner or later and informed—"

"Somebody did."

"What?"

"There was a fella from up north in the pen. He told Whitey about you up here. Figgered you might be wanted, though he didn't know for what. Whitey knew, though. He knew it must be you, but he didn't say nothin'. He kep' it to himself, but when he got sick and was goin' to snuff out, he tipped me off. We was good pals, see? Told me if ever I got out to come to you and you'd look after me."

"And if I didn't?"

"Well," Spike shrugged. "I can tell what I know. You're still wanted for that killin'. You'll keep me all right. I was in for life, but I made my getaway, and now I'm here. It's as good a place to lay low in that I'd want. No white men ever come here, you say. Nobody knows I'm here. It's safe as a church." He stretched his great arms luxuriously, like an animal, and grinned triumphantly at Glenn. The latter nodded mechanically. He was sitting slumped in his chair, his wide shoulders drooping, despondent. He appeared defeated. For twelve years he had been free, obeying no one but himself; and he was the sort of man to whom freedom is life. Now he was in the power of another. He spoke without looking up—

"I suppose there's nothing else for it."

Spike laughed harshly. It was the laugh of a man who had not laughed for so long that he had almost forgotten how.

"Mebbe you don't let white men in your country, Mr. Glenn," he said, "but here's one white man you've gotta put up with."

There was silence between them for a long while, but Glenn was finally roused from his somber abstraction by a movement among the huts and tents in the clearing. In the excitement attendant upon the arrival of Spike he had almost forgotten about Tom Squirrel, but that worthy was brought forcibly to his attention again when he saw him glide into one of the larger huts, carrying a rifle.

He watched suspiciously. He saw another Indian shamble across the clearing, look quickly about him, then disappear into the hut. A little while later, came another, peeping about the corner of the building, then sneaking inside. After a while came another and another, until soon the majority of the Indians of Matabanick, about a score all told, were in the hut, whereupon Glenn reached into a drawer of his desk and drew out a revolver.

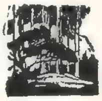
A wary light flashed into the eyes of Spike, who missed the significance of the Indians' movements, and he knitted his black brows.

"What's comin' off?" he demanded truculently.

"Nothing—nothing," said Glenn, his gaze still riveted on the hut, but he got to his feet and went out of the room. Spike, curious, followed.

At the door leading to the veranda, Glenn hesitated, then put back his arm, commanding silence.

"Wait a while," he said. "I want to watch. There's trouble of some kind."



THEY waited, pressed back in the doorway. The clearing was unusually silent. The Indian youngsters were all indoors and the squaws had disappeared. From the hut into which the Indians had gone, however, they could hear a murmur of voices. One redskin appeared in the doorway, looked about cautiously and then stood there so that he could hear what was going on inside and, at the same time, keep watch on the clearing.

"A guard!" exclaimed Glenn, thoughtfully. He left the doorway and went to the rear of the building, then plunged into the heavy undergrowth which fringed the clearing.

He went cautiously, making little noise, and finally emerged directly behind the hut in which the Indians were gathered. It was a roughly built structure, and by peering through one of the many chinks in the logs he could see the Indians inside, squatted about in a circle. In the center of this circle stood Tom Squirrel, and the Indian was making an oration to them in their own language. Glenn listened, his lips tightening with the realization that he was facing a mutiny.

"The white man takes our furs and makes much money," declared Tom Squirrel. "If we brought our furs to Lost Beaver, we would get more. I know, for I have been there and they told me so. But the white man will not let us go to Lost Beaver. Is that fair?"

He paused challengingly. There were dubious murmurs from the other Indians, most of whom were afraid of Glenn or contented with their lot and averse to change.

"The white man beat me just now," went on Tom Squirrel as he touched his battered features. "I am the son of a chief, but he beat me. Is that right? Would any other white man dare to do that? Will the tribe let the white man beat a chief's son and say nothing?"

This had more effect, for the Indians were proud, and while they had no chief now and did not exist as a tribe under Glenn's régime, they had the dignity of their race and preferred to think that the old days were not entirely gone.

Tom Squirrel saw that the point had taken effect. He pounded his chest.

"Me, the son of your old chief! He beat me. As one beats a dog. And for nothing," he added, wisely.

The Indians nodded and mumbled to each other in guttural murmurs.

"And now," went on Tom Squirrel, his evil, mahogany face twisting in many wrinkles as he talked more rapidly, "now he brings another white man here. A dark man who looks bad. Why does he come here? Why does he come when no other white men are allowed? Will he beat us too? Is not one white man, this Glenn, enough? Soon there will be more white men and we will be slaves. They will make us work for them and we will have to give them our furs and get nothing in return."

With a true demagogue's gift for creating imaginary wrongs and conjuring up frightful bogies, he carried his listeners along by the sheer force of his words, by his crude eloquence, and once he had their attention, once he had reminded them that there was the blood of a chief in his veins, he played upon their pride, their fear, until soon the whole hut was filled with whisperings, murmurings. And at that juncture Tom Squirrel swooped toward a corner of the little building and grasped a rifle.

"We have suffered long enough," he declared. "Let us drive the white men away, back to their own country. We have rifles. We are stronger than they. Then we can trade at Lost Beaver and get plenty of fire water, which he will not let us have."

Glenn had heard enough. He saw that Tom Squirrel had almost swayed the Indians over to his side. Impressionable, easily convinced, they were beginning to reach for their rifles, their knives. Boldly, he strode around to the front of the hut. The guard, peering inside, did not see him until he was upon him, and then gave a squeak of fear, which died in his throat as Glenn grabbed him by the collar and flung him to one side. He rolled over and over in the dust, finally scrambling to his feet in continuation of this undignified progress and went scampering away to his own tent.

Glenn strode into the hut, into the very center of the circle until he confronted Tom Squirrel.

"What is this?" he thundered. "Why do you meet here in the dark? What is all this whispering about?"

The very sound of his voice awed most of the redskins, although a few still murmured and fumbled with their rifles. One or two sneaked out the door. Tom Squirrel, who saw his mutiny slipping out of hand, stepped forward.

"We are tired of you," he began, insolently. "We wish to be free—"

He got no further for Glenn swung swiftly, his heavy fist catching the Indian on the jaw. Tom Squirrel crumpled to the floor and lay there. Glenn wheeled on the others.

"Now get out!" he roared. "Get out of here, and no more of this talk or I'll treat you all as I'm going to treat Squirrel. Quick! Quick, now! Get out!"

He stepped menacingly about, and in a twinkling the doorway was jammed with frightened redskins plunging out of the hut. They dropped their weapons and rushed madly for the door, fearful of his great fists, fearful of the deadly revolver, and in a moment the hut was cleared.

Glenn went over to the corner and dragged Tom Squirrel to the entrance of the building. After a while the Indian opened his eyes and groaned, but he glared defiantly when he saw Glenn standing above him.

"Ah, you're awake, are you?" asked the trader. "We've had enough of you, my man. Quite enough, d'you hear? You weren't content with trying to knife me back there a while ago and trying to choke me to death, you dog, but now you'd try to turn the Indians against me. There's no room here for the likes of you."

He paused for a moment and smiled as he saw a look of fear creep into Tom Squirrel's smoldering eyes.

"There's no room here for you. I ought to shoot you right where you lie, you black-hearted cut-throat. After all I've done for you and your tribe. Found you dyin' off with disease and bein' cheated outa your eye-teeth by every Tom, Dick and Harry fur trader that came into the country. Sellin' a winter's furs for a bottle of booze. I cleared out the rascals and set your tribe on its feet. Gave medicine to your sick people and paid you good money for your furs and kept the booze away from you. And this is what I get for it!"

He reached down and dragged Tom Squirrel to his feet. The redskin cringed.

"Yes! A fine lot you'll stand up to me now that you're alone and I haven't got my back turned. A fine lot!"

He wheeled toward the river and flung his arm in a broad gesture toward the placid stream.

"Come," he roared. "Get away! Get away from Matabanick and never come back. We have no use for the likes of you. Go to Lost Beaver if you want and see if the other tribes will take you in. See how they'll receive you at Lost Beaver when you don't bring the rest of the tribe! Quick!"

The Indian made as though to protest, for he had a deep-rooted fear of being cast off from his own tribe, but Glenn menaced him.

"Get to your canoe."

He hustled Tom Squirrel down to the river bank, while Indians peeped out of every hut and tent in frightened wonder and Spike leered on the scene in amusement from the veranda. Down to the river bank they went, Glenn whipping the Indian with scornful words, and when they reached the shore he motioned to Tom Squirrel's canoe.

"Get in!"

The Indian made a gesture of protest, but he wilted as Glenn stepped forward angrily, and then got into the canoe.

"Away you go! Anywhere! Never come back."

Submissively, Tom Squirrel paddled out into the river. He looked back once, and his dark face was distorted with terrific malice and undying hate. Then he turned to his paddle again, and the gathering twilight swallowed him up.

IV

THUS it came about that John Glenn, the king of Matabanick, made a remorseless enemy and at the same time began to share his wilderness kingdom with one who was a black criminal and a treacherous killer. He had crushed an uprising in much the same manner in which he had gained his kingdom—by showing the iron hand; and while he told himself that he was now secure and that the Indians would never again even think of disputing his power, he was often disquieted by remembrance of the look of malice which Tom Squirrel had cast him that evening he had paddled away from Matabanick.

Then, kingdom or no kingdom, he found that he was growing homesick.

Days passed. The short-haired man, Spike, developed a more respectable hirsute thatch and slipped indolently into the easy and monotonous round of life at the post. For a while it suited him. He had not loafed in such freedom for a long time. Day after day he did nothing but sit on the front veranda, his feet in the air, and smoke his pipe.

At first Glenn did not talk to him a great deal, for he was filled with resentment against the blunt-jawed outcast who had come into possession of his secret, who had forced his company upon him and had forced him to give the hospitality of Matabanick to a white man for the first time; and, although he talked briefly to Spike at meal times, for the most part he ignored him.

Perhaps he thought he could drive the man away. In this he was mistaken.

"The trouble wit' you," observed Spike heavily one evening as they sat at the table after supper, "is that you've lived alone so long you don't like good company no more."

He picked at his crooked, yellow teeth with a match and spat on the floor. He knew Glenn did not like him to spit on the floor.

"You think," he continued, his tones thick with insolence, "that just because you rule the roost up here, nobody can talk to you. Now don't think for one little minute, Mister Glenn, that you can freeze me outta here. I won't be froze out. I'm used to bein' by myself just as much as you, although I'm not used to bein' treated like a little yella dog without no friends. So if you think you can make me sick of this place and clear out, you're wrong. All wrong! For there's other places that I'm a lot sicker of than this one, and I don't want to go back to 'em, believe me. In a few years, mebbe, when things kinda blow over I'll beat it for the States, but until then I'm stayin' right here and you're goin' to put up wit' it. See?"

"You're quite welcome to stay," replied Glenn stiffly.

Spike laughed harshly.

"Not a bit. I know I'm not welcome. You're wishin' I'd get outta here. You're sore because I got somepin' on you, but that's all right. You can just get used to it. I ain't goin' to do you no harm at all. I'm a peaceable guy and willin' to live and let live, so we might as well get along agreeable. Oh, I know. You don't want me, but I'm not askin' to share your graft. You just tend to your fur tradin'. I won't butt in."

"Fortunately for me."

Spike did not miss the sarcasm.

"Mebbe — mebbe. I ain't sayin' I wouldn't try to run this place of yours if I could. It's every man for himself in this world, and you've had your share of fur money from all tellin'. But you just be agreeable and we'll get along nice."

Glenn stared at Spike for a moment without a word and then he laughed contemptuously.

"You!" he said. "You rule this country! Do you know how long it took me? Twelve years! Twelve years of fighting!"

"Sure, twelve years' work that the next man won't have to do. It's all done for him. The Injuns'll be just as scared of the next white man as they are of you."

Spike poured himself some more tea.

"Aw, well, what's the use of talkin' that way?" he growled to himself. "We'll get along all right, but just don't be so high and mighty wit' me. See?" He turned to other topics. "I remember oncet I was in Toronto—"

He proceeded into a long-winded narrative, largely compounded of lies designed to glorify his own prowess, but Glenn, forgetting his resentment, found himself listening eagerly. He listened to Spike's stories of the outside world with a repelled fascination of late. He did not want to hear them, for he had cut himself apart from this world and had resigned himself to his exile, but he found himself listening in spite of himself, found himself eager to hear this stupid, brutal and vicious man talk of cities and men, and the more he heard, the more he found himself thinking of the world he had left. He found that he was thinking more and more of white men and their land and that the trading post was becoming depressing. The solid barrier of trees across the river became mournful spectaters of an exile which he began to find unbearable, and whenever he looked at the river now it was not with the thought that it flowed north into the country of furs, but that it flowed from the south where white men lived.

And so it came about that day after day John Glenn listened to the talk of Spike, the stranger from the white man's land, and as he listened to those tales, he knew an aching hunger for the country he had left. There was irony in the fact that he had never toyed with ideas of return until the arrival of Spike, who made such return impossible.

"D'you think—suppose I went back now," he said diffidently one evening. "D'you think they'd remember me? That I'd be picked up, I mean."

Spike glanced swiftly at him.

"What's the idea?" he asked. "Gettin' homesick are you?"

"No," replied Glenn hastily. "Not homesick. Just wondering."

"Well, you can just drop that kind of wondering," growled Spike. "It won't do you no good. You can't go back and leave me up here. If you went away, there'd be white men swarmin' in, and somebody'd tell the Mounties about me. No sir, you don't go thinkin' any fool things about clearin' away back south. You gotta stay here. You made this a fine place for a man to hide in, and it's goin' to stay that way."

"I'm not thinking about it," lied Glenn coldly. "I was just wondering if they'd remember. There must be lots of small towns a man could settle down in. It was twelve years ago—"

"Mebbe they would and mebbe they wouldn't. They'd remember you mighty quick if I spilled the beans on you, though. Don't you forget that. And I'd spill 'em mighty quick if you ever left me up here."

GLENN looked gloomily into the dusk, at the moonlight streaming across the river. There was no freedom in Matabanick any more. Hitherto he had stayed because he wished; now he was bound to stay. He could not even risk returning to his own world in the chance that twelve years had wiped out the memory of him. An overpowering nostalgia had been growing upon him of late, and he felt that he wanted to go back, to leave the wilderness and go perhaps to some town where men who were "wanted" a dozen years before would never be remembered. But now he could not for Spike knew his secret and Spike needed his protection.

He had lived apart from the white man's world for twelve years and had thought he was hardened to isolation, but now he found himself possessed by a profoundly moving desire to return to civilization. The constant presence of Spike, the very sound of that other white man's voice, stirred up in him a fire which he had long considered dead, and he found himself longing to see white people again, to see their towns and cities, to hear the pleasant hum and racket of urban life once more. The silence of the wilderness to which he had long become reconciled, which at first he had even welcomed, now became unendurable; the great, green forest became hateful because it was like a prison wall. He wanted noise, movement, life, because Spike had recalled all these things and because the longer he brooded on his isolation the more frightful it became.

"Five more years of this and I'll be insane," he whispered to himself, and he knew he was right, for homesickness, held at bay for many years, now swept him like a raging fever, and a wilderness which had at least been tolerable now became a prison which could not be endured. He thought of city streets, under murky, smoky skies, with the rumble of traffic, and he thought of theatres, restaurants and hotels; of crowds, of people thronging the busy stores, of brightly lighted streets at night, to the accompaniment of a clanging of bells and honking of horns and roar of trolleys, and the longing to rise and leave this silent wilderness became so intense that he felt weak and helpless in face of the knowledge that he was doomed to stay in the exile he had voluntarily sought.

Perhaps, he thought, he did not know what he wanted. When he thought of leaving Matabanick, he knew that this would be hard, for the place was his. He had hewn out his wilderness kingdom by main strength throughout the years and he had guarded it jealously. He knew he could never be resigned to seeing it pass into the hands of other traders. And yet, the place was a prison to him, and he had a longing for the haunts of white men. Not only Spike stood between him and freedom, but Matabanick itself. He puffed at his pipe morosely.

WITH the departure of Tom Squirrel, quiet had prevailed at the post. Glenn's power had never seemed more secure, and yet he brooded more than had been his wont.

As for Spike, he found Matabanick tiresome, for he was not by nature fond of the wilderness, but he had been broken to imprisonment, and at least this was immeasurably better than a lifetime in the cells. But there was little for him to do, and as countless proverbs have declared, idleness hatches mischief. His mind harked back occasionally to Glenn's scorn when he had hinted that he might run the post just as well as the trader; he planned lazily, considering the possibilities of such a coup.

But it was impossible. He was greedy, and he envied Glenn the power and wealth which Matabanick brought him. Glenn had plenty of money, the Indians told him, in the bank at Cochrane. He transacted his dealings through a trusted Indian who went down to the town a few times every year for supplies and the like. Spike speculated on the possibilities of getting some of this money for himself. Privately he planned blackmail, but he had no need for money just at the time, and the time was not ripe. When he was ready to leave Matabanick he could frighten Glenn into buying his further silence.

He was sitting on the river bank one evening, occupying himself with these pleasant fancies when he became aware of an Indian, a gnarled, crippled little gnome, Limping Wolf by name, who was shuffling about near-by. This Limping Wolf had been crushed by a falling tree while a boy and had been crippled for life. It had not sweetened his nature. Forced to fight for existence in a community not overly kind to the weak, he had developed cunning, and was not generally trusted. He made his way awkwardly along the bank, his long, brown arms almost touching the ground, his bright, glittering little eyes fixed on Spike as he limped along, his toothless mouth grinning in a smile meant to be propitiating.

"Beat it!" grunted Spike.

"Limping Wolf, friend," grinned the cripple with humility.

"Beat it," grunted Spike again. Spike could speak but one language and he had high convictions in the superiority of the white race. All others were scum. His contempt for the Indians was devastating.

Limping Wolf, who could speak two languages, having learned a smattering of English from Glenn, ignored the command to depart.

"Bringum message," he said.

Spike regarded him in surprize. Message from whom? His attention having been secured, Limping Wolf came over beside him and gazed out over the water, then began to talk without looking at Spike at all.

"Tom Squirrel, he wantum talk wit' you. Tom Squirrel, he say you come to leaning birch up river now."

He motioned toward the stream. About a quarter of a mile away there was a white streak in the mass of green foliage along the bank. This was a leaning birch tree, a familiar landmark, singularly outstanding.

"What's he want?" growled Spike, surprized that Tom Squirrel should be so near Matabanick.

Limping Wolf chuckled horribly to himself and did not answer. Instead he scrambled to his feet again and went swaying down the bank with surprizing speed considering his infirmity. He turned at once and looked back.

"You go," he said, his features wreathed in a hideous grin.

He disappeared behind a rock.

Spike scratched his head. He sensed an intrigue of some sort, so he got to his feet and went down to the landing, where he appropriated a canoe and paddled up the river. The movement excited no interest for he often did so, and he soon passed out of sight of the trading post, finally arriving at the leaning birch, where he found Tom Squirrel seated on the bank awaiting him. He beached the canoe and came up to the Indian.

"Well," he said. "What's the trouble? You want to see me?"

Tom Squirrel nodded. Spike had expected humility, had expected that perhaps the Indian wanted him to plead for him with Glenn, but the redskin was strangely independent.

"Injun near Lost Beaver say p'liceman killed," he grunted. "You killum. I know."

Spike gasped, then stared. He felt as if he had received an electric shock.

"You're crazy!" he said angrily after he had recovered himself. "I don't know nothin' about no policeman."

Tom Squirrel gazed at him with sneering disbelief flickering in his eyes.

"I know," he said with finality. Then, suddenly, "You likeum Glenn?" he inquired.

Spike was cautious.

"Mebbe."

Tom Squirrel grunted.

"You no likeum," he asserted.

"Well?"

"You come along me," said the Indian. "You'n me, we killum."

Tom Squirrel said it as casually as if he were suggesting that they paddle down the river. Spike glanced at him in surprize. Callous as he was, he was somewhat taken aback by this cool proposal to help murder John Glenn.

IT WAS characteristic of Spike's treacherous nature that his first thought was in regard to the possibility of turning the plot to his own account by informing Glenn, but then it came over him with unpleasant truth that the Indian knew of the killing of the Mounty of Lost Beaver and that this was the very object of his introductory remark. He felt as though he were in the jaws of a great trap. Tom Squirrel had him absolutely in his power and he knew it.

"What good would it do us to kill him?" he asked, trying to gain time.

"You takum place. Live in big house." The Indian motioned in the direction of the trading post. "Me big chief then. We makeum money."

"You figger if we can get rid of him I can take his place and you fellows will back me up?"

Tom Squirrel grunted assent.

"The Indians are with you?"

"Me big chief."

"How 'bout me. I don't know nothin' about runnin' the tradin' post. Other traders'll find out Glenn is gone. They'll come up here."

There was no hesitancy in Spike's mind concerning Glenn's removal. He thought no more of that than of lighting a match. But he had to look ahead. His own safety must be considered.

"Won't know," said Tom Squirrel. "White men never seeum long time now."

"White men never see him?"

The Indian shook his head. Well, that was feasible too. It fell in line with what the haggard man up the river had said. Glenn himself had told him. Beyond a few brushes with traders some years before he had seen no white man. He had feared recognition for his case had been famous at the time. His photograph had been distributed broadcast and he had many enemies in the fur country—curious enemies. All his fur dealings had been through Indian intermediaries.

He was in a quandary. Never a clear thinker at best, he found himself bewildered by the problem the Indian presented. He needed Glenn. He needed the protection of the white trader. In fact, he had insisted on it from the start, and while he bore no love for Glenn, he realized that Matabanick was a safe refuge as long as the trader remained. But then he had to consider the fact that Tom Squirrel knew about the murder of the Mounted Policeman, the bronzed young redcoat he had slain in the early morning on his way down the river near Lost Beaver. He had to consider the fact that a word from Tom Squirrel would bring the law upon him for that killing, with every probability of a hanging. It would do him no good to refuse for Matabanick would be no refuge, would afford no protection if Tom Squirrel told what he knew. Of two evils he was obliged to choose the lesser and although for a long time he scratched his head and stared at the river as if hopeful of finding a third alternative he finally admitted to himself that the Indian held the upper hand. Despite the fact that he was being forced into the plot, Spike was rather flattered at being invited into such an alliance, not knowing that Tom Squirrel wanted him merely as a white man to strengthen his scheme, to give the Indians confidence.

He looked at Tom Squirrel. They understood each other. Into Spike's face had crept a look of cupidity. He loved power, and now he had a chance for power and wealth allied. True, it meant isolation at Matabanick, but he was an outcast as it was. As for Tom Squirrel, he saw the chance for which he had been waiting many years, the chance to ally himself with one who would help him rid Matabanick of the white man and restore him to his chieftainship.

"I'll come in wit' you," said Spike bruskly. "Keep your mouth shut about this other thing though. That Mounty."

Tom Squirrel nodded in satisfaction. Together they talked, laying plans.

V

GLENN sensed a strange atmosphere about Matabanick. Alert to the slightest change in the placid current of life at the trading post, he felt some such difference now, although he could not define it. The Indians seemed watchful, as if a thunderstorm were brooding. Spike seemed suspiciously polite, and he had caught the ex-convict regarding him with contemplative gaze several times.

He wondered if there was some scheme afoot. Scheme! There could be no scheme. He brushed away the idea contemptuously. The Indians were docile, now that Tom

Squirrel was gone, and Spike could certainly never hope to go far with any plot. Still, he was worried, and he had an instinctive feeling of lurking danger, but he put it down to his imagination and tried to forget about it.

However, as he lay in bed one night, while the whip-poor-wills chanted with rhythmical, sawing notes in the bush, he found himself disturbed by a premonition of harm. He could not go to sleep. He got up and went to the window.

The clearing was flooded with moonlight, which shone in a wide, rippling silver road across the river. The sky was flawless and deeply blue, the trees cast heavy shadows, the air was very still.

As he looked he saw one of the shadows break as another shadow detached itself from it and glided swiftly across the clearing. It was the figure of a man, and he sped silently across the open space to one of the tents. There, he was lost for a moment, but then he appeared again, running to another tent, and as Glenn watched, he saw this figure swiftly visit each of the huts and tents in the clearing. Then, in his wake, came other figures, the Indians, emerging from their dwellings, until soon the clearing was alive with shadowy forms.

Then he heard a sound, a sound close by in the hall outside his door. He wasted no further time, but dressed himself quickly and then went over to the door and waited tensely, listening.

He could hear a faint rustling, cautious footsteps as if some person were stealthily creeping down the hall, and his face grew stern as he listened.

Cautiously he opened the door and peeped out. The hall was in darkness save for a patch of moonlight flooding through a window at the far end, and in this light he was just in time to see a figure vanishing down the stairs. He looked out farther, and then something slapped swiftly against his throat and tightened horribly.

He struggled and leaped out into the hallway as two figures sprang on him from either side of the door. A rawhide thong had been flung about his throat, and it had been drawn tight, half strangling him. He fought fiercely, but his assailants were nimble and agile and he could not get his hands on them. Coughing and choking, he suddenly relaxed and tumbled to the floor.

The thong relaxed. He lay quietly until a dark figure bent over him. Then he sprang, hurling the Indian against the railing at the head of the stairs and wheeling to meet the other as he leaped at him in frightened surprize.

Silently they fought in the dark hall. He was a strong man and the Indian was powerless against him, but the other recovered and came at him from behind, lank fingers seeking his throat. They struggled back and forth, crashing against the wall, into the railing. Glenn exerted every ounce of strength he possessed; he smashed about him with his huge fists, but it was dark and his blows often went wide. One of the Indians flopped to the floor and wrapped his arms about Glenn's ankles so that the trader was powerless to get away.

Glenn and the other man fell together when the trader lost his balance. They went crashing against the railing, already weakened by their constant impacts; it creaked, splintered, then gave way, and all three went tumbling down the stairs.

Glenn landed atop the other man, who was stunned by the fall, and flung the second Indian aside as he rose, half dazed. He wrenched himself free and leaped for the doorway, but hardly had he reached it than there came a rush of figures from the veranda, and half a dozen dark forms closed about him. He was thrown to the floor, still struggling, still fighting. He kicked and struck about him, and although barked shins and bleeding noses testified to the fury of his struggles, he was at last overcome, and lay bound and breathing heavily on the floor.

Somebody struck a match, and when the lamp was lit he saw that the big room was crowded with Indians, the Indians of Matabanick whom he had ruled for twelve years. They were gazing at him in faint terror for they still feared him, but there was no pity in their glances. Then, standing above him, he was aware of Tom Squirrel, grinning evilly at him, hatred blazing in his dark eyes, while sprawled in a chair near-by was Spike. The latter was gazing contemplatively at him, quite unconcerned.

"Why didn't somebody knock him on the head and be done wit' it?" demanded Spike in an aggrieved tone. "Now we gotta go and get rid of him anyway. Who's goin' to do the job?"

He fingered at a revolver in his belt as he spoke and looked at Tom Squirrel, who only grinned maliciously and spoke rapidly in his own tongue to two of the other Indians, who left hastily. Glenn could hear them descending the cellar stairs and after a while he could hear the clink of bottles from his own small private stock of good liquor. Whereat the faces of the Indians lighted up.

The Indians returned, carrying bottles, and these they distributed. Glenn was ignored, and for half an hour he lay there, while the Indians went about the business of getting drunk. He did not know what was going to happen to him, but he feared the effect of the liquor. The Indians of Matabanick were wilder than the redskins of most other trading posts; they had been kept apart from white men, and Glenn knew that when liquor inflamed their brains they would revert to savagery. Particularly did he fear Tom Squirrel, whose hatred of him was intense.

At last, however, he heard drunken words outside the door as Tom Squirrel gave orders to two of the men. The others he could hear yelling and screeching out in the clearing, reckless with freedom, inflamed with drink.

"Whatcha goin' to do?" demanded Spike thickly of Tom Squirrel, but the Indian turned away and Spike stumbled into the room and gazed stupidly at Glenn, lying bound and helpless on the floor.

"You—you—" stammered Glenn in his rage. "A white man you call yourself—a white man—"

"Sure I'm white," muttered Spike truculently. "None o' your lip or I'll soak you one."

He stood over the prostrate figure, snarling. But Glenn was not to be silenced.

"A white man. You —— fiend, and you'll stand by and let them go ahead with this. You'll let that Tom Squirrel burn me —burn me, you hear!"

Spike stared soddenly, and then he turned and looked out into the clearing. Indians were rolling drunkenly about and, as he looked he saw some of them obeying the orders of Tom Squirrel, grouped about a dim heap in the centre of the open space. He saw something glow, saw a flame rise and then he licked his lips. He was too drunk to realize the full meaning of it, and he hesitated a moment.

"Well, what can I do about it?" he demanded fretfully. "You gotta be bumped off—"

He shambled unsteadily away, clutching a bottle.

The lamp glowed solemnly on the table. As Glenn looked hopelessly at it, realizing the treachery of Spike, realizing that Tom Squirrel now controlled the Indians and that liquor was fast reverting them to savagery, he knew the full extent of his peril. He gazed at the lamp. It appeared to afford a slim hope of escape, and he rolled over and over on the floor until he reached the table, then managed to struggle to his feet, using the table leg as a brace. His ankles were tied, his wrists bound behind his back and he tottered unsteadily, but he managed to get near the lamp, and he groped about behind him until his fingers reached the chimney. This, he removed, and placed on the table. Then, steeling himself for the ordeal, he groped about until the tightly knotted rope was in the flame.

For a moment he was unable to stand the searing pain and he drew away, but he realized it was his only chance and again he forced his wrists over the flame. The pain was agonizing as the flesh of his wrists was burned, but he managed to attain an angle at which the flame was concentrated chiefly on the rope, and then clenched his teeth and endured the burning.

IT WAS slow progress, and the excruciating pain more than once made him move his wrists involuntarily away. He could hear footsteps on the veranda. Desperately he strained at his bonds, but they had not burned sufficiently. The footsteps came nearer. He plunged the rope full into the flame and waited.

Tom Squirrel stood in the doorway, his eyes burning with drunken hatred. He had a knife in his belt, Glenn saw. The Indian did not at first comprehend, and then he grunted and sprang forward. With a mighty effort Glenn strained at the rope again and suddenly it snapped. His wrists were free. He threw himself at the Indian, and they tumbled to the floor, Glenn reaching for the knife. His searching fingers found the weapon, and he swiftly rolled away while the befuddled Indian strove to collect his wits. Glenn hacked frantically at the rope around his ankles, just as Tom Squirrel recovered and crawled toward him. But he had gained the respite he needed. The ropes fell apart, and he sprang to his feet and made for the door.

The Indian shouted, and Glenn ran into half a dozen redskins crowding in from the veranda. They were drunk, and he took them so by surprize that he had crashed his way through before they knew who he was. There was no use staying to fight for he was outnumbered; so he leaped off the veranda and raced across the clearing.

He heard a shot behind him and he redoubled his efforts, leaping from side to side, dodging this way and that, keeping to the shadow of the huts and tents. He heard yells, more shots, a sound of trampling feet, and he dashed for the river.

He looked back once, and he could see the great glow of the fire, a flashing of lights, confused figures running back and forth and an occasional scarlet flash as a rifle rang out. He was near the river now, but the moonlight was so clear that he knew he was an easy mark, and he was fearful of a bullet at any time.

He reached the bank in safety and dove into the water. By the time the Indians has reached the water's edge, he was far out in the middle of the stream and swimming steadily, his head a dark, round object in the moonlight.

Two or three rifles spoke. Glenn flung up his hands. The Indians heard a loud cry, and then he disappeared beneath the water.

They stood there watching for a long while, but he did not reappear. A dark log floated down the stream, crossing the barred path of moonlight. To Spike, who gazed in drunken apathy, it was mindful of a corpse.

The Indians returned to their celebration. Once the feared trader was out of the way, they acclaimed Tom Squirrel as their chief and their deliverer. They were forgetful of the fact that although Glenn had made money from their furs, he had also done much for them. In lean years he had looked after them; he had helped the sick; he had protected them from the depredations of the traders in liquor. Now all this was forgotten.

Spike went back to the veranda and gazed benignly on the celebration in the light of the huge fire. He was just as glad Glenn had been killed in the river. Had to get rid of the fellow, of course, but this burning stuff wasn't just right. Through a hazy glow he watched the redskins reeling about the clearing. As the night wore on fights became numerous, bottles were smashed and not a few of the braves fell into the river in the course of their jubilation. Shrieks, shouts, the bawling of awakened and frightened infants, the thumping of a drum improvised from a discarded copper boiler increased the bedlam.

"Atta boy!" applauded Spike in vast good humor, taking a pull at the bottle.

"You'n me'll run this place, eh Tom?" he said drunkenly as Tom Squirrel came near. He clutched a bottle of rye by the neck. "You go tell 'em that, Tom," said Spike. "You 'member our bargain. You go tell the Injuns I'm boss here now. I'll act right by 'em. You go tell 'em that see. Go tell 'em."

He dragged Squirrel over to the veranda steps, staggering, and stood there unsteadily, a foolish grin on his swarthy face as the Indian made a guttural speech in his own language, the Indians desisting long enough from their orgy to listen with drunken solemnity. Tom Squirrel punctuated his speech frequently by pounding his chest, and when he finally pointed to Spike with a gesture unmistakably derisive there was a cackling of drunken laughter.

Spike stared suspiciously, and then he saw that the Indians were jeering at him.

"Whatsh th'idea?" he demanded darkly, turning on Tom Squirrel. "Whatsh comin' off?"

But Tom Squirrel had turned his back on him, and from the Indians he received nothing but scornful glances and derisive laughter. He strode forward unsteadily. The Indians fell back and resumed their celebration, ignoring him, but the cripple, Limping Wolf, was unable to make good progress, and Spike collared him.

"What—what'd he say?" he demanded, his face dark with rage as he shook the Indian. "C'mon, tell me?"

Limping Wolf snarled in sullen anger and wriggled, but he could not twist himself free.

"Hurry, you li'l rat," said Spike, his befuddled brain aflame with suspicion. "Wha'd he say?"

"He say—he say you big fool," stammered Limping Wolf. "He say him chief now. You on'y big fool."

With an oath, Spike hurled the cripple to one side. Limping Wolf fell into the sand, mumbling to himself.

So that was it! The double cross. Angrily, he reeled across the clearing toward

Tom Squirrel who was talking to two other braves. Spike grabbed him by the shoulder.

"What's the idea?" he roared, whirling Tom Squirrel about. "You tryin' to double cross me? You promised we'd share an' share alike if I helped you."

Curtly Tom Squirrel brushed aside his arm, then deliberately turned his back on the raging Spike. The latter looked about him and he became aware that a crowd had gathered, and all about him he could see inscrutable brown faces. He also saw brown hands close to knives, and he could see the firelight flashing on rifle barrels. He realized that at a word from Tom Squirrel he could be annihilated. He stammered, he weakened, and then turned away and plunged blindly through the crowd, back to the trading post, and there he flung himself into a chair on the veranda.

He was dazed by this terrific and incredible treachery. He was alone among strange, hostile people, all his pitiful dreams of power gone aglimmering. All his conceited dreams of having these Indians at his bidding, going into the wilderness at his command, bringing back furs, shiny furs, which would make him wealthy—all these fancies had gone crashing to the dust and he was overcome with unbelievable despair and disappointment.

He groped for a bottle beside the chair and drank heavily. There he sat, slumped forward, staring morosely out over the clearing, at the great fire, at the leaping, fantastic figures of the Indians. The black sky, the dark forest, the moonlit river, the red fire, all these seemed to be laughing at him, pitilessly and silently, and he felt suddenly afraid.

Gradually he grew sleepy. The liquor numbed his brain and his head fell on his chest. Finally, he snored. The bottle fell from his fingers and the liquor flowed out over the floor. The Indians ignored him. He slept, drunken, defeated, a victim of his own treachery.

VI

WHEN Glenn dove into the river he saw the floating log slowly drifting down the stream, and when he heard the rifle shots behind him he simulated injury and let himself go under. Then, being a good swimmer, he continued under water until he judged himself to be on the far side of the log.

He judged correctly, and when he again emerged he was hidden from the sight of the Indians on the bank. He clung to the wet and slippery refuge until it finally drifted beyond the bend and out of sight of Matabanick. Then he took to the shore and followed an obscure trail by the river.

He followed this trail which was close to the water's edge until morning, and when the sun rose he dried his clothing and slept for a while. Then, after eating freely of berries which grew plentifully by the path, he continued his journey.

Glenn was so relieved at having escaped from Matabanick with his life that the seizure of the post worried him little. There would be time enough to consider that later. For the present he sought refuge. He was satisfied that Tom Squirrel, Spike and the Indians thought him dead, and this was in his favor for his future course would be rendered easier.

Toward noon he came to a trail which branched off into the woods, and this trail he followed until, after a while, he came to a small clearing. There was a dingy tent, and an old, hard-bitten Indian was cooking meat over an open fire. He had heard Glenn approaching long before the trader himself appeared out of the bush and he was peering curiously at him as he came up to the fire.

"Hello, Sam," greeted Glenn.

The Indian grunted a welcome and then waited for the trader to explain his presence there. His keen eyes missed no detail of Glenn's appearance, and he had a shrewd idea of what had happened before the trader even spoke.

"Tom Squirrel chased me out," said Glenn briefly. "Tom Squirrel and a white man. They wanted to kill me. Tom Squirrel is chief now."

Sam listened to the news impassively and stirred the fire.

"I want you to help me drive out Tom Squirrel from Matabanick. Get all the good Injun fellows you can. Double prices for your furs next winter."

Sam nodded his satisfaction. He had always hated Tom Squirrel anyway. There were a number of Indians who, like himself, stayed in the bush throughout the summer and came to Matabanick but seldom. He would be able to enlist them on Glenn's behalf. They were few in number; perhaps but a dozen at the most could be gathered at once.

"Me gettum," he said.

They discussed the prospects of regaining Matabanick. Greater than his desire to return to civilization was Glenn's determination to recapture Matabanick, to recover his lost kingdom. It was his—his own accomplishment, and he was fiercely jealous of it and could not bear to see it in the hands of another. He would rather die in the attempt to regain it than to return to the haunts of white men defeated—defeated by a rascally, ambitious redskin and a greedy, treacherous criminal.

THERE came a morning a week later when nine Indians gathered at Glenn's refuge in the forest. Lean, dusky fellows of middle age, faithful to the trader, he knew that he could trust them to fight for him with all the bravery and cunning at their command. He wished their numbers had been more for they were greatly outnumbered by the force at the trading post, but he was well satisfied with their loyalty and with their worth as fighting men.

Particularly appreciative of their fidelity was he in view of the fact that bush fire had been raging in the wilderness to the north for the past few days. The forests were dry and the weather was warm, with high winds blowing to the south. There was a constant veil of thin smoke over the land. He could not have blamed them had they preferred to stay near their tents in expectation of danger, for the forest fire sweeps down swiftly, but they had left their wilderness homes at his call.

They gathered about the camp-fire in a grim, silent circle, their rifles lying near-by, and waited for him to speak.

"You all know what has happened at Matabanick," said Glenn gravely. "You all know that Tom Squirrel and the other white man have driven me away. You know that Tom Squirrel now calls himself chief."

There were murmurs of assent.

"Can Tom Squirrel get the money for your furs that I can get you? Can Tom Squirrel keep out the white traders as I have kept them out? You know that it is better for you as it is. If there are any here who do not want to help drive Tom Squirrel out of Matabanick, let them drop out. Let them go back to their women."

No one moved.

"There will be fighting—" some of the faces lighted up eagerly, for old traditions were not dead— "some of you may be killed. If you are afraid, do not come."

They were motionless. Glenn gazed apprehensively to the sky.

"The big fires are burning. The wind is from the north. If any would rather be back in their tents, let them go."

Still no one moved. Glenn nodded his satisfaction. He picked up a rifle loaned him by Sam.

"Come," he said simply, and led the way toward the river.

There they embarked in their canoes, and the little party set out in the gray morning for Matabanick.

The smoke cloud hung like a mist on the horizon, thicker than it had been for some days. The sky was dull and the river was sluggish and unruffled. There was an atmosphere of tense expectancy; even the trees seemed cringing, waiting. Glenn realized that the forest fire was closer than he had thought; he knew that the sharp-eyed Indians also recognized the fact. Should the wind rise, he knew that the danger would be great.

The canoes glided up the river and, as the morning passed, they recognized by landmarks that they were nearing Matabanick. They had the advantage of surprize, even if they were outnumbered, and Glenn determined to make fullest use of this advantage by attacking the post by land. If they came by river, they could be wiped out by defenders of the place before they could set foot on shore, but if they swept in suddenly from the forest they might easily capture Matabanick by surprize. Tom Squirrel would not have time to rally his Indians. The more Glenn considered this plan, the more it appealed to him as almost certain of success. So when they were near a bend in the river, beyond which lay the trading post, he gave the signal to go in toward shore, and the canoes swung swiftly in beneath the shadows of the great trees.

Now, on a huge rock above the river, the Indian, Limping Wolf, had been officiating as lookout, watching the progress of the fires to the north. The wind had risen during the morning and where the smoke had once been a mist it was now a cloud, and he could see it rolling up from the densely wooded horizon in thick, silent, billows. He had just about reached the conclusion that the steadily rising breeze boded ill for Matabanick and that he had better warn Tom Squirrel that flight was advisable when he discovered, with a start of surprize, the canoes proceeding up the river.

It did not take him long to grasp matters, and terror filled him when he saw that in the first canoe sat none other than Glenn, or his ghost. He showed more haste than he had ever shown before in his life and, despite his infirmity, scrambled down off the rock and plunged down the bush path in the direction of the post, a few hundred yards away.

On the shore, oblivious of this, confident that they would come upon Matabanick by surprize, Glenn gathered his Indians and gave them their instructions. They were to deploy through the bush, within sight of each other, but sufficiently apart to give the impression of great numbers when they opened fire; they were to make as much noise as possible when Glenn should fire the first shot at the outskirts of the clearing; and they were to shoot Tom Squirrel or the white man, Spike, at sight. They were not to shoot any of the Indians already at the post, unless they sought first to shoot the attackers, for Glenn realized that these Indians had turned against him only because they were easily swayed, and he wished as little bloodshed as possible. He believed that they would be frightened and thrown into confusion by a surprize attack and would surrender without battle, which would be entirely according to his wishes.

Silently, then, they entered the forest. A slight rustling of branches, the occasional hasty fluttering of startled birds—these were the only indications of their progress. They became swiftly moving shadows in the undergrowth and then the forest swallowed them up.

Above them the sky was dun-colored, for the wind was blowing high and the fires were drawing closer to Matabanick with every hour. The Indian, Sam, sniffed and then pointed to the smoke-filled sky through the intersections of the trees. He shook his head doubtfully. But they went on. Fire or no fire, Glenn was determined to recapture Matabanick, even if it were wiped out ten minutes afterward.

The bush began to thin out and soon, through the trees, he could catch a glimpse of the roof of the trading post. A few stealthy strides and he had reached the undergrowth at the edge of the clearing. Here, however, an unexpected sight confronted him.

Indians, carrying rifles, were running hastily about. He could hear the voice of Tom Squirrel somewhere in the background as the Indian gave orders. He could see Limping Wolf struggling awkwardly about among the huts and tents. He could hear the squalling of children being hastily bundled into shelter. Tremendous excitement prevailed. There could be only one explanation; the Indians had somehow become apprised of the impending attack.

THERE was no time to lose. He raised his rifle and fired toward the trading post, aiming at one of the upper windows. The glass shattered, a frightened shouting rose from the clearing and then behind him, on either side, arose a weird and unearthly screeching, punctuated with a resounding banging of rifles as his own Indians advanced to the attack.

But Tom Squirrel had been warned in time. Hardly had the screeching commenced than shots rang out from the trading post in a perfect fusillade. The clearing seemed to be emptied of scurrying figures in an instant and bullets pattered among the trees. All his hopes of a surprize attack were destroyed, but he ran out from the bush and his own men emerged into the clearing at the same time.

The light was poor for a great pall of smoke hung in the dull sky. Through the windows of the trading post he could make out dim figures and among the tents and huts he could see crouching figures. Shots rang out on every side. He managed to get ten or twelve yards across the clearing when he saw one of his own Indians a few feet away tumble heavily to the ground. Bullets were plopping into the dust on every side. Another redskin, just coming out of the shelter of the bush, reeled and fell, kicking, while another suddenly dropped his rifle and clung to his shoulder with nerveless fingers.

Clearly, this could not go on. The trading post was still twenty yards away and they could not hope to win by hand-to-hand fighting. He could see flashes of flame as the rifles barked, and he knew that Matabanick was too well defended. So he turned, shouted to his men to take cover and retreated ingloriously to the bush.

In the shelter of the trees, with the sound of desultory firing from the post ringing in their ears, they gathered. They had left two Indians lying dead in the clearing and one man was wounded in the shoulder so that Glenn now had but half a dozen Indians fit for further battle. These, however, were staunch, and had no comment on the failure of the first attack.

They could see that there was no use making another open attack as they were outnumbered and the defenders were under cover while they were not. They could never hope to overcome that open space in the clearing against the concealed fire of the men in the trading post. Perhaps three or four of them might make it, but they would make it only to be cut to pieces in hand-to-hand fighting, annihilated by a superior force. They agreed that they should wait until nightfall, in the meantime sniping at the defenders from the woods and, above all, making every effort to locate Tom Squirrel. Should the leader show his head and should a lucky shot bring him low, Glenn was confident that the others would quickly give up the defence of Matabanick and surrender to him.

They made their way cautiously to the edge of the bush again and took their places in the undergrowth, but the Indians kept to the trading post. Once in a while one of Glenn's men would fire at a shifting figure passing by one of the windows, but Tom Squirrel wisely remained in hiding. So the afternoon passed and the smoke cloud which hung over Matabanick grew heavier and more opaque, seemed to sink lower in the sky, while the grayness on the horizon became black. There was a brisk wind in the trees, and one or two of the Indians sniffed in alarm and told Glenn that the fire was but a few hours away and travelling fast.

Night fell at last, and the sky became fiercely crimson to the north, while a great ruddy glow rose to the zenith. They could plainly smell the approaching fire. The Indians in the trading post did not light the lamps for their figures would be visible thereby to the lurking snipers in the bush, but Glenn became aware of a number of creeping figures in the clearing. He watched curiously and then chanced a shot. There was a rush. Half a dozen of the men from the post converged in a dark mass and, as Glenn's men opened fire, something glowed. There was a burst of flame and then the dark figures rushed back toward the trading post.

A heap of wood had been piled there by the party and as the flames rose, the edge of the clearing was illuminated so that Glenn's men were forced to draw farther back into the shelter of the bushes. In the flickering light they could see that the bonfire had been lighted at the cost of two men.

They were obliged to wait for the fire to die down. Glenn knew that the defenders would grow weary with the night and he knew he still had a chance to regain the post as long as he did not throw away his opportunities and waste his men by premature attacks. So the night wore on and the silent glow in the sky grew brighter as the surrounding darkness deepened, while the bonfire at the edge of the clearing gradually died. The coals glowed, but there was no longer the brilliant radius of firelight which etched every branch, every tree trunk in bold relief and made attack impossible.

Glenn crouched in the undergrowth, waiting the proper moment. Just before dawn he decided. The smoke from the northern bush fire was heavy for his eyes were stinging. He knew that when morning came it would be hanging over Matabanick in a thick cloud. He had ordered his men to cease firing, hoping that the defenders might think they had withdrawn. By morning, he knew, some of the men in the trading post would be asleep, others weary, others careless. None of them had much stomach for fighting, and he knew that the approaching forest fire was worrying them.

There was a sudden crackling in the bush behind him. He turned quickly and peered suspiciously into the darkness. Clearly, it was not one of his own Indians for they could glide through the bush as silently as cats, but this noise was evidently made by one unused to such progress. He saw a dark form close-by and he knew it for Sam on the alert, but he placed a restraining hand on the Indian's arm and bade him wait.

Then he heard the bush crackle again and a figure loomed into view and he heard a hoarse whisper:

"Mister Glenn, Mister Glenn, don't shoot. It's me—Spike!"

VII

HIS face contracted with contempt. What treachery was that black fiend up to now? His grasp on the rifle tightened.

"Mister Glenn, Mister Glenn, where are you?"

"Here," whispered Glenn, abruptly. "Stop that noise."

He had no fear of Spike for his men were on every side and he knew Spike realized that a false move meant his death.

Spike came nearer.

"I'm a friend," he panted. "I'm on your side. On the level, Mister Glenn, I'm a friend to you."

"Speak lower. A fine friend you've been to me."

"I know, Mister Glenn. I made a mistake. I got all that was comin' to me. Them red skunks over there did me dirt."

"Why did you come here?"

"I'm through. I'm through wit' them," whimpered Spike. "The crooks. They double-crossed me."

"Just as you double-crossed me. What more would you expect? What more did you deserve?"

"I won't stay wit' them. I played a bad one on you Mister Glenn, but let me come wit' you. I don't want to stay wit' them redskins."

His voice was a whine, and he was cringing.

"Come with me? No. You can't be trusted. Go back to them. Go back, I tell you. You made your choice, now stick to it. Take your medicine."

"But lissen," pleaded Spike hastily. "I come to tell you somepin'. They're comin' around behind, sneakin' up on you. They're goin' to try and drive y'out into the clearin' and then knock you off. You and your crowd. Let me stay, Mister Glenn. I'll help. We can clean up on 'em now you know they're comin'."

Glenn considered swiftly. He did not trust Spike. This might be a trap to divert his attention, to divide his forces, and enable an attack from the trading post. Then again, it might simply be a lie of the ex-convict's to gain favor. Still, there was a possibility of truth in it for it would be very easy for Tom Squirrel to come up behind him unexpectedly and attack from the rear. Caught between two forces, they would be wiped out.

He summoned his men and, as they gathered about him, dark, uncertain shapes in the gloomy bush, he told them what Spike had said. They listened silently to his instructions, then drew away again, scattering to points of vantage where they might better be able to cope with such an attack. There they waited in the night hours.

At last came a barely perceptible sound from the bushes, a faint stirring of twigs which might have been made by some nocturnal animal, and then the forest burst into activity. There was a flash of flame, a shot, then a yell of anguish; a constant uproar began as the screeching of the attackers mingled with the cracking of rifles. Forms ran crashing through the undergrowth. One tumbled heavily with a groan. The attackers broke and fled. Soon only a heavy threshing of bushes marked their incontinent flight.

Spike's hoarse voice broke out.

"See, Mister Glenn. I was right, wasn't I? If I hadn't told you, they'd 'a' cleaned up on us. You lemme stay wit' you, eh, Mister Glenn."

Glenn said nothing and Spike stayed. He knew that Spike was largely influenced by the belief that he had a big force of Indians at his command and that the post was doomed to fall; also that he feared for his own hide should the trader recapture Matabanick. He did not consider that he owed Spike any thanks for telling of the surprize attack. Spike had simply used that information as an excuse to ingratiate himself with what he thought would be the winning side.

"They double-crossed me," went on the ex-convict in a hoarse, querulous monotone. "That Injun Squirrel did me dirt, all right. Wouldn't pay no notice to me after you—after you went away. Ditched me, he did. Made me get my own meals. Can you beat it? My own meals. I've led an awful life there, Mister Glenn."

"You deserved it."

"Sure, I guess I did, all right. Didn't know when I was well off. But I wouldn't 'a' seen you killed, Mister Glenn. Honest, I wouldn't. I was pretty sure you was all right when you dived into the river. I told 'em. I said, 'Aw, he's drownded. There's no use shootin' any more,' and made 'em come away, and all the time I was sure you was all right."

Glenn laughed shortly.

"I don't believe it, you know."

"It's the truth. Honest it is. That Injun, Squirrel, had somepin' on me, see? He made me come in wit' him."

"Keep quiet or they'll be shooting this way."

"Aw right, Mister Glenn. I'll be quiet. But I just wanted you to know I was wit' you to the finish. See?"

He subsided into muttered protestations of loyalty.

Morning dawned gray and bleak, scarcely morning at all for the darkness of night persisted in the south, and they saw that the red glow did not fade from the smoke cloud. Instead, it covered all the northern sky. There was a wind and it came sweeping toward the south, bowing the tree tops violently.

The smell of smoke was strong, and they could even see flakes of black ash floating down across the clearing. The forest to the north was veiled in smoke. The river wound from a foggy bank, the water pallid and gray trees cowered in sad obscurity in the dingy cloud.

There were flitting shapes in the foggy clearing, and Glenn could see that the Indians were growing nervous for the fire was very close. He judged the time ripe for another attack. Unless the wind changed the fire would be upon Matabanick during the morning.

He gathered his men, told them to prepare for an attack and finally gave the signal, rushing out into the clearing, tearing like mad.

The smoke cloud veiled their movements, and although there came a scattering of shots from the trading post, they took little effect.

Glenn and his handful of Indians withheld their fire, but sprinted across the open space, scarce able to see each other in the thick smoke, running like fantoms toward the gloomy bulk of the big building in the centre of the clearing. He could see the veranda of the trading post now through the fog, and there came a stab of flame and more shots rang out, for now the defenders could see them. He plunged forward and he could see one of his Indians scaling the veranda rail. They were lithe as panthers in their movements.

HE WAS aware that the forest fire was much closer than he had thought. The air was close, hot, stifling, and the hot breath of the blaze was swept down on the clearing by the roaring wind. As he crossed the clearing he could see high flickers of flame from back in the bush, flames which rose scarlet against the rolling volumes of smoke. Trees at the edge of the clearing were threshing and moaning as if fearful of the approaching tornado of fire. The flames were sweeping down with a hollow roar.

He was at the veranda now, and he leaped up the steps into a knot of dim figures. They scattered as he bounded toward them. Some scrambled through the doorway, others leaped off the veranda. Over to one side he could see a tall figure whom he instinctively knew to be Tom Squirrel, swinging his rifle about his head like a club, urging the defenders to hold firm. Glenn, berserk, rushed toward him, but Tom Squirrel at that moment saw that his Indians, divided in fear of the attackers and of the approaching flames, had given way and were scattering on every hand. He ran to the edge of the veranda, leaped over the rail and disappeared into the smoke.

Glenn went into the trading post and his men crowded after him. It had been a complete rout. Through the windows they could see dim figures fleeing madly hither and thither. The building had been emptied of its attackers, who had fled in fear, and now they were occupied with their new terror, the forest fire.

The Indians were all down by the river. Squaws were gabbling in fright, children were howling, there was a great din of crashing pots and pans and above all sounded the increasing roar of the fire which seemed to gather in speed and overwhelming frightfulness as it approached Matabanick. All the wilderness to the north was ablaze and the wind roared like a ravening beast. The Indians were fleeing before it. Already he could see canoes out on the river, loaded to the gunwales; already he could see others embarking. The redskins were in the grip of a rank panic. They tumbled madly over each other in their zeal for flight.

"We'd best go," said Glenn to the Indian, Sam, who stood, silent and stern, beside him. Sam nodded. Matabanick was doomed. There was sadness in Glenn's heart for the place was his and he knew that his handiwork was marked for destruction, but he was glad that it had again been his at the last and that he at least had the satisfaction of wresting it from the hands of Tom Squirrel.

There was still time. To the south of Matabanick was a wide stretch of wilderness that had been burnt over the year previous and here, he knew, the fire would be halted. Despite its appalling ferocity, despite the furious roar of the flames and of the wind, despite the hot redness of the sky and the thick blackness of the smoke, he knew that it would be half an hour before the fire reached the post and that in that time they could all be well up the river.

He left the post and went down toward the shore.

The Indians had almost all fled. He could see canoes bobbing through the smoke as the braves paddled skillfully up the stream, with lusty strokes, spurred on by fear of the roaring terror behind. A few dilatory redskins were just embarking as he reached the river bank.

There were still a few canoes left and he assigned his men to these. The Indian, Sam, took the stern of one and waited for him to take his place.

He turned and looked to the north. The world seemed to be burning up. The roaring sky was black as night and a tremendous red glow leaped high from above the blazing forest. The heat of the enormous conflagration was overwhelming, blinding, and smoke swept in clouds across the clearing. He could see the dim shape of the trading post there, the trading post which represented all his efforts, all his life for twelve long years. It looked very lonely for he was deserting it to the indomitable fury of the flames.

Then, as he watched, two figures, locked together, came reeling through the smoke, stumbling down toward the bank. They were fighting, struggling fiercely, and even as they fought, Glenn could see the flash of a knife, could see an arm upraised, could see it fall and rise again. Right to the bank they came, fighting like catamounts. Then in a flash he recognized them. The tall, dark, figure with the knife he knew to be Tom Squirrel, and the other was Spike—the two men who had been treacherous to him now locked in death-grips.

They tumbled down the bank into the water until they were waist deep. There under the black sky in the cloudy smoke with the hot breath of the onrushing forest fire upon them, with the massed trees along the opposite bank but eerie shadows in the smoke, in the roar of the wind and the flames, they battled, grimly, tensely, silently, for their lives.

Once, twice Tom Squirrel freed his right hand from Spike's grasp and swung with the keen knife, and each time came a red smear on the back of the white man's shirt. He kicked and struggled, the waves battered them about, they fell and went beneath the water. Spike emerged gasping, his hands still at the redskin's throat, holding him beneath the waves. There was a great splashing as Tom Squirrel struggled in a frenzy of terror. Glenn saw Spike lose his balance and again fall beneath the water, but again he rose, still clinging to the Indian, struggling to keep his own head above the waves, but after a while the splashing grew weaker and weaker, and at last Tom Squirrel ceased to struggle. Spike relaxed his grasp, the redskin slipped limply out of his fingers, and the body sank to the sandy bottom.

SPIKE looked about him, dazed. His back was slashed and bleeding, and his clothes were soaking. He reeled and fell into the water, got to his knees, struggled toward the shore, fell again, then crawled on hands and knees.

"Hurry," shouted Glenn. "Into the canoe."

Spike shook his head, mumbling something they could not hear.

"Him die," said Sam, the Indian, impassively.

He looked back at the roaring wall of flame above the trees, and would have paddled away had not Glenn restrained him and leaped out of the canoe. He went over to Spike, lying helplessly on the shore.

"Badly hurt?" he asked.

"Done for," muttered Spike. "He—he tried to get me—for goin' over on your side. Said he'd—pay me up—"

He coughed, and it was a cough of death. Glenn looked at the man who had been thus a final victim to the treachery which had marked all his life at Matabanick, and there was pity in his eyes.

"Lissen," gasped Spike. "I'm a goner. I played a dirty trick on you."

"That's all right. Let it pass."

"Not that. This is different. Whiteman. Remember me talkin' about Whiteman?"

"Yes."

"Whiteman told me to tell you before he died. He told everything. Cleared you—"

Glenn leaned forward, catching his breath in excitement.

"Cleared me? Cleared me, you say?"

Spike nodded feebly.

"Took all the blame for that affair. Wrote—wrote a confession. He was feelin' bad about it before he died. Told me if ever I got out—to hunt you up—come up here and tell you—"

"And why didn't you tell me?"

"I figgered you'd have to help me—" The voice grew huskier. "I had to have some place to hide. Long as you thought I had somepin' on you—long as you thought you was still wanted and I'd squeal on you if you turned me down—you'd have to let me stay. If I'd told you, I couldn't 'a' made you help me. See? You'd 'a' gone back anyway, and I couldn't stay up here—alone. Needed you here too. Just thought I'd use what I knew—"

He fell back, exhausted.

Glenn crouched there, understanding. Spike, knowing that if he delivered Whiteman's message, Glenn would return to civilization and that his own hope of a hiding place under Glenn's protection would be wrecked, had kept the secret. He had, as he said, used what he knew to force Glenn to remain in the wilderness and protect him.

For a moment, he hated the prostrate figure, the man who knew no honor, no law but his own, the man who was false, treacherous, and deadly; but now that he was free, free to leave the wilderness, free to return to his own people, he was filled with gladness, and he forgave Spike everything for having told him at last.

"Come," broke in the guttural voice of the Indian in the canoe.

"I'm coming, Sam. A minute."

Spike sighed heavily and turned over on one side.

"Spike."

There was no answer. Spike was dead.

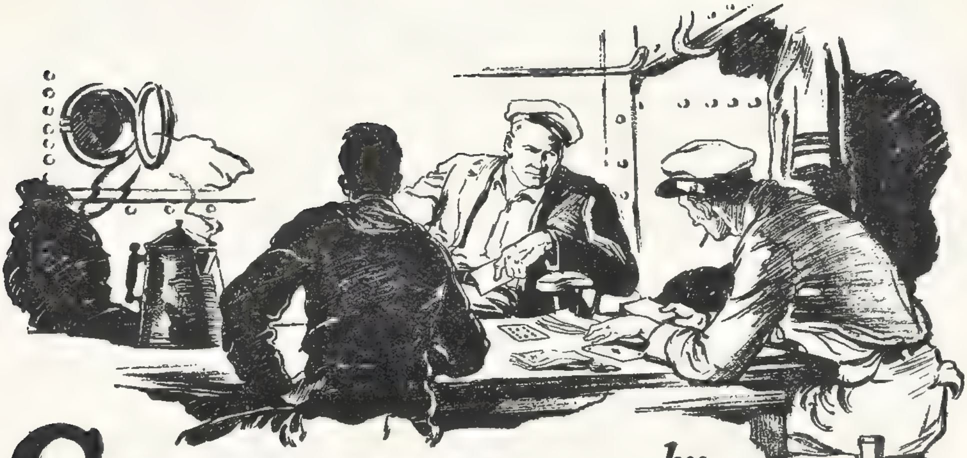
"Fire ver' near." The Indian had glanced indifferently at the body of Spike, and then looked meaningly back at the raging fire, now so close that flickering spires of flame were bursting from the bush within a short distance of the clearing. The fire roared, belched black smoke and infernal gusts of heat. The great trees were crashing and falling and crackling before the overwhelming flames.

"I'm coming."

Glenn stepped into the canoe. With a stroke of the paddle the Indian sent the craft skimming out over the water.

There was still time for escape, but there was no escape for Matabanick. In a little while, within the hour, it would be destroyed. Glenn saw a dark figure lying by the river and he could see the dim shape of the trading post looming sadly through the smoke.

Before the evening sun had set he knew there would be nothing left of the Matabanick wilderness save an enormous desolation. His Indians would be scattered to the four winds. He cared little. His work was done and no others would usurp the power he had held so long. He was going away, away from the kingdom, back to his own people.



COCKNEY

by
Robert Carse

Author of "The Kid."

ALCOHOL flooded in torrid waves through the brain of "Levi the Russ," inflaming his eyes, pulsing through his great body. He pushed back from the bar and looked down the narrow strip of wood where his shipmates of the *Savannah City* stood drinking. Levi lurched erect, tensing the massive muscles of his back and shoulders. With heavy fingers he tore open the throat of his jumper, thumping his hairy chest with great blows. A good town, this of Iquique, a good place, this *Café de los Marineros!* Levi the Russ was very drunk. A hoarse rumbling grew in his chest and ended in a fierce, maddened shout. Again he hammered his chest.

"Me! Me! I am Levi the Russ, Levi the Sailor!"

He hitched at his wide leather belt, growling again. "Cockney" Toohey stretched his wiry form over the bar beside the Russian. He raised quizzical eyes to Levi.

"Blessed good rum, eh, Levi?"

Towering over the little Englishman, the Russian stared down with red pig-eyes. Once more the throaty, subterranean grunting became the trumpeting of a colossus. A huge hand swooped out to grasp the shoulder of the other.

"Cockney swine—you t'ink you drink at same bar wit' Russ sailorman? Scum o' Liverpool docks!"

The words were engulfed in the volcanic grunting. Unflinching eyes looked up at Levi from the pock-marked face of Cockney. The little man raised his glass and drained it of the fiery brown liquid. A sour smile twisted at the gash of his mouth. He clicked down the empty glass and wiped his lips appreciatively on his sleeve. The Russian leaned down over him, hairy hand still clenching the other man's shoulder. Cockney's fingers crept stealthily across the bar toward the squat neck of a pewter beer bottle.

"—— Roosian swab!"

Cockney's voice was a shrill curse as he swung the bottle. Levi the Russ sheered from the blow, and the bottle glanced from his thatch of thick red hair. With a mighty wrenching of dungaree cloth the giant Russian flung the little man from him, hurtling him through the air, to land limply against the iron legs of a table. Again the roaring howl throated upward through the smoke-fog. The Russian stood spraddle-legged, hands thrust in his plaited leather belt. His chest boomed as he thwacked it.

"Me—I am Levi the Russ!"

He swung down the room, fire-red eyes on his silent shipmates lining the bar. At the door he lurched to a standstill and glanced back. Cockney dragged from underneath the table and tugged himself to his knees. Trembling fingers ran across the

"Cockney," copyright, 1925, by Robert Carse.

thumping gash at the base of his brain. Down the room the drunken Russian glowered at him. Once more Levi bawled his mouthing cry, then swayed into the night.

"Who done that gash for you, Cockney?" asked the mate the next morning as the wiry Englishman, face made horrible with pain, stood at the wheel while the *Savannah City* thumped about in a wide circle, then lumbered off through a sea of quivering brass toward Balboa and the Canal Zone.

Cockney looked up from the compass card, a wan smile playing at his eyes.

"Levi th' Ruski, Mister."

"Him 'n Chilean licker don't mix, Cockney. He'll kill ya yet. He's a real bad actor!"

The mate shook his head sagely and paced up and down in front of the binnacle. Cockney eased the wheel off a couple of spokes and inclined his throbbing cranium in disapproval.

" 'E wont 'ave the charnce to tike me on agine, sir!"

With this cryptic remark Cockney lapsed into silence for the remainder of his trick on the wheel.

Through low, palm-studded islands the shabby *Savannah City* labored into Balboa. The forecastle mess-boy brought the latest news from the galley when he came forward with the supper mess-kid at five o'clock. Jans, the officers' mess-man, had overheard the skipper telling the chief mate that he had just received orders from the agents of the line to coal his bunkers and shove off at once for San Francisco, discharge and proceed to Portland to load canned fruit for Baltimore and home. The mob cursed caustically as they shovelled into the curry and rice, eager for the hectic delights of Panama City.

Gold, pellucid seas curled from her cutwater as the *Savannah City* wallowed up the California coast on her way to San Francisco. At night in the forecastle the men directed sly glances at the taciturn Levi where he sprawled in his bunk, fitful eyes on Cockney, hunched on the deck, playing solitaire.

THE last night out of the Golden Gate Cockney finished his game, collected the thumb-smudged cards and put them in his sea-bag. He raised his eyes quickly. From his bunk Levi the Russ was watching him covertly. Cockney plunged his hands deep into the bulky bag. He fumbled about for a moment, then pulled forth a heavy leather scabbard, from the top of which protruded a wooden haft. With a severe jerk the little sailor dragged out a four-foot steel knife from the scabbard. Caressingly he ran his fingers down the keen steel to where the broad blade tapered into a cruel, upturned point. Cockney leaned over the thing, running blunt fingers softly along the edge, like a *maestro* ascertaining the pitch of his violin. "Frenchy" Leros, the little Englishman's watch-mate, spoke in awed question across the forecastle.

"*Par le gros diable*, w'at ees that theeng, Cockney?"

The pockmarked sailor croaked with laughter in answer to the interrogation.

"This 'ere? This's what th' —— greasers down in Nicaraguay likes ta call a machete. A mean piece o' tin, arn't it? Y'see, w'en I was in the blinkin' *Helen o' Troy* outa Galveston I got sloshed down in one o' those spiggoty towns an' th' —— *Helen* s'iled wifout me. Hot? Blarst me ears! Hotter 'n th' fire-room o' ——! 'N me there on th' beach, eatin' av them spiggoty bananas on th' dock, cursin' me swinish skull fer drinkin' so much av that there *mescal*. Th' third d'y, w'en I was getting jolly-well fed up wif bananas, there's a blinkin' lot a shootin' starts outside o' town, an' then comes closer 'n' closer. Me, I ducks into th' bananas piled on th' dock, cursin' meself fer a lug. 'Round sundown, shootin' off their guns an' mouths, some o' these 'ere *revolutionistas*—it sounds like a blinkin' lot but it don't mean much—wearin' dirty whites, come slouchin' down th' dock.

" 'Yii-iipp—eee!' yells one blighter, seein' me stern stickin' fr'm out th' bananas.

" 'Blarsted ——!' says I to meself, an' jumps out afore he pokes 'is rusty b'ynet through me liver."

Cockney halted his monologue for a moment, and sent a searching glance around the forecastle. The men sat on their bunk rims, spellbound by his staccato recital, admiring eyes on the great machete where it rested on his knees. Cockney slapped the flat blade of the machete by way of histrionic emphasis and continued, staring straight into the eyes of Levi the Russ.

"Two av them *mozos* tikes me atween 'em—me arskin' wot it's all abart. They brung me afore the skipper o' de *revolutionistas*, a little skinny, fat bloke wit' big, black w'iskers. He savvies English, an' he arsks me who I am, an' I tells him quick.

"'I'm jus' a drunk'n s'ilor,' says I, 'wif no love fer revolutions.' He don't like that, this little fat skipper, an' 'e s'ys, 'Will 'e fight or will 'e get filled full o' lead over against that there *adobe casa?*' That warn't hard. '*Viva revolutionistas!*' I yells like a beggar at a county cricket gime.

"Then they gives me this thing, they not havin' many Mausers."

Again Cockney halted his story to stroke the dully gleaming blade of the fierce machete. He got up from his bunk and stood with his bare toes wide on the deck, swinging the machete in short arcs. He spoke again in shrill accents.

"That's how I got me nime an' fime wif dis l'idy 'ere. Me an' th' *revolutionistas* marched throo de jungles an' took Managua, th' capital o' the country. Th' spiggoties, they called me th' 'Bloody One' cause o' me work wif de l'idy 'ere. Th' d'y we took Managua I left slews an' slews o' dead 'uns in me wike, an' th' l'idy 'ere, was red wif gore! That night some o' dose spiggoty generals killed de fat little skipper wif de big w'iskers, an' set some other bloke up as *presidente*. Me—I shoved off fer th' coast, havin' enough o' revolutions an' killin' an' gore. I caught a coastwise lugger fr'm the port an' I arn't never goin' back. But behin' me I left me nime an' fime as th' 'Bloody One,' th' *gringo* killer. I'm a killer w'en I'm up, that's wot I am! Me an' me l'idy 'ere."

"Cockney" ended his tale with a sweeping thrust of the machete, making the blade shrill through the air. With the massive knife still in his hand he looked over at Levi the Russ where he crouched in his bunk.

"I arn't got no love fer —— Roosians, either!"

He sheathed the machete, returned it to the sea-bag and pulled taut the throat lanyard. A wide grin radiated the face of Cockney's watch-mate as he padded across the forecastle to snap off the light bulb.

Flame-winged dawn found the *Savannah City* rolling in the white-caps off the Golden Gate, the pilot flag flapping from the halyards over the bridge.

"Gor bli' me! Lookit 'er come!"

Eyes shining with aroused ecstasy, Cockney leaned over the port-rail on the forecastle head. Staysail and flying jib, fore and after topsails set, the lean schooner-yacht bearing the pilot came flashing from under the lee of Alcatraz Island toward the waiting ship, her canvas shining like ivory, a coral lace of spume slithering from her forefoot. About twenty fathoms from the freighter, she dropped away in the wind, canvas whipping against the booms. The pilot's gig slipped swiftly down the stern davit-falls into the frothy wake, the schooner pointed up into the wind, and fled toward the olive-gray outline of Telegraph Hill. Cockney sighed with joy at the sight, picked up the coiled boat rope and bighted it over the side for the approaching gig. The smart cedar tender danced alongside and the pilot swung up the rope-ladder to jump over the rail on deck. The jingle of the bells sounded faintly from the engine-room and the turbines throbbed once more as the ship threaded toward her berth.

The men were painting over the side in the forenoon glare of the sun when Frenchy Leros, who had been standing gangway-watch, broke the news to them. Bracing against a stanchion, he leaned far out over the side so his words would carry to the paint-spattered workers sweating on their stages below.

"You see ze *Iron Duke* across de slip? She's jus' in from Portlan'. They have one ver' bad stevedore strike up there, fellah from *Iron Duke* tell me jus' now. All crews gotta work own cargo! Tha's alla same scabbin', *non?*"

The forecastle gang thought it was the same as scabbing when they mulled it over at noonday mess. Frenchy Leros turned to his watch-partner where he sat musingly bending a tin fork.

"Cockney, you are one o' dose sea-lawyers, w'at you theenk?"

The pock-marked Englishman dropped the fork to the table and sat staring at the dust-motes floating in the stream of sun from the deck-light overhead. He shrugged his narrow shoulders.

"You blokes remember th' articles you signed in New York? Somethin' in there abart standin' two watches an' workin' cargo in port if necessary. A copy o' them articles is out there on the bulkhead in the alleyway now. I says read 'em an' weep! I thinks this 'ere s'ilor an' th' rest o' you guys is all gonna work th' cargo aboard an' ashore in Portland. In a way it's scabbin' but we signed to it in th' articles."

Standing on the inner side of the craning circle, Frenchy laboriously read aloud the ship's articles thumb-tacked to the bulletin-board in the alleyway.

"Cockney—he's right—we work cargo in Portlan'."

AS THE *Savannah City* crawled past Capo Blanco through an oily, waveless sea, the captain sent the boatswain forward for the crew. The men shuffled nervously up the ladder to the door of the captain's cabin. The "Old Man," sweat filming his freckled forehead, pushed back the screen door and stepped out on deck in front of the men. His eyes flitted from face to face in the little group. The Old Man was worried, thought Cockney, as he listened to him. The captain talked swiftly, as if eager to get rid of an obnoxious duty.

"In 'Frisco the agents told me that there's a —— bad stevedores' strike in Portland. We got cargo piled up and rotting on the docks for us there. Some one's got to work that cargo aboard and clear what little stuff that's in her now outa the for'ard hatches."

The Old Man halted to catch his breath and mop his face with a big bandanna.

"You men been with me in this hooker four months now. You're a good crew, even though it did take us two days to get outa Valparaiso when you were all so drunk. You signed on this packet to stand two watches and work cargo in port, if necessary. In this here case it is necessary. But I ain't making a scab outa no man. Any sailor here who thinks it's scabbin' to obey the articles he signed to—don't have to work stevedore when we get in. An' they're payin' a dollar an' a half an hour for those men who do. What d' you say, men?"

The eyes of the forecastle mob turned in question to the two leaders. Cockney, hands stuck through the shoulder straps of his singlet, stood silently, awaiting a sign from his competitor in the control of forecastle affairs. Levi the Russ shifted from one naked foot to the other, keenly aware that the cagey Englishman had shifted the utterance of the decision to him. The Russian looked at his mates and then at the Old Man.

"Me—Levi the Russ—don't scab for no man, Cap'n, articles or no articles!"

Levi glowered defiantly from under his shock of red hair at the little Englishman. Cockney pulled one hand from his singlet and scratched his ear, then grinned at the Old Man.

"Cap'n, I don't like workin' scab fer no man, but seein' as we all signed on in New York t' work cargo if necessary—an' as we all wasn't drunk w'en we done so, I'll turn to an' work th' bleedin' cargo w'en we 'its port."

"*Muy buen'*" said the Old Man writing Cockney's name down on the sheet of paper he fished from his trousers' pocket.

"How about th' rest o' you guys? Good. You're the only one who don't want to work then, eh, Levi? All right, lay for'ard now an' finish up paintin' them booms."

The men trailed after Levi across the hot, rusted plates of the forward deck and trooped into the cool shadows of the forecastle. Trembling with anger, Levi the Russ stood in the middle of the place, mouthing inchoate curses as he waited for Cockney. The little Englishman whistled cheerfully as he entered the forecastle and squatted on the bench inside the door. The Russian's grumblings crescendoed into a roar.

"Dirty scum of a scab! What for you tell Ole Man you work cargo? I—hammer dose brains out! I—"

Cat-like, Cockney leapt across the room and pulled open his sea-bag. Bright eyes gleamed up at the vast Russian.

"Levi—pipe down, you swab! Any more —— like dat fr'm you an' I'll carve me bleedin' nime on yer chops wit' th' machete here. G'wan on, ye big hay-shakin' stiff!"

Still growling, the Russian backed out of the forecastle as Cockney hurled vitriolic curses at him.

POKING her wide bow through the swirling current, the *Savannah City* circled around the last bend of the Columbia in her journey from the sea and nosed into the blue-black ribbon of the Willamette River. The sun scrolled a golden pattern on the fleece of clouds drifting over the great mountain ranges massing upwards in purple shadows to snow-sheathed crests on all sides. Ahead, the city lay somnolently in the last light of the sun.

"So this 'ere is Portland, eh? A pretty plice fer a dockies' strike!"

Cockney jerked at the handle of the anchor winch to send the steam crackling and burbling through the pipes. A slender tug slipped down the stream toward the ship. Frenchy Leros grunted as he sent the heaving line spiraling outward in a graceful curve, to land in the outstretched hands of the deckhand in the bow of the tug. Night blotted out the flaming of the sun as they warped the ship alongside.

Cockney clattered in to the forecastle, his forehead wrinkled in a scowl. Frenchy Leros stood in front of the mirror, encompassing his wind-roughened throat in a violently striped silk collar. Cockney slapped his watch-mate sadly on the back.

"There arn't going to be no going ashore in this 'ere 'ole o' perdition, Frenchy. Th' —— union men 'as the dock picketed— I just been out to the dock gite. There must be all o' two hundred o' them standin' there—just w'iting fer poor s'ilormen like us, who signs their articles wifout readin' av them first. The first mite tells me four o' the crew fr'm the *Hanson Liner* lyin' astern o' us went ashore th' other night an' got jolly well killed. So tike orf the collar, me lad, an' leave th' lidies fer those who st'ys ashore! They got abart two hundred scared farmer lads down th' dock, billeted in a three-mast schooner. They's th' ones who has been doin' the rale scabbin'. They're afr'id o' bein' murdered as they sleep, an' ye can bet yer *pesos* on that."

"Eh, what you say, Cockney? *Nom d'un chien!* I mus' wait ontil we make Cristobal on ze way home before I get one dreenk? *Salle cochon!*"

Frenchy stuffed the striped silk collar back into the sea-bag with a sputtering curse.

Six days of back-splitting labor, and the crew had the *Savannah City* loaded, with the fumbling aid of the nondescript aggregation of strike-breakers who occupied the schooner down the dock. Four o'clock Saturday afternoon they hammered the last hatch batten into place and knocked off, the job done. As they sat at night chow the stevedore foreman came into the mess-room, gingerly bearing a black satchel. He smiled back in answer to Frenchy's question.

"Yes, yes, you guys done a good job! Here's yer dough. Sorry ya won't have a chance t' spend it in this town. Them's a tough bunch o' turkeys out there at the gate. Well, so long, gents!"

With eager fingers the men ran through their packets of bills. Levi the Russ sat sourly in his corner, hands plunged in his dungaree pockets, unruly eyes on the sheafs of money in the hands of his mates. He uttered his deep-throated growl and stamped out of the forecastle shaking his great head fiercely. Frenchy Leros counted his wad once more, then slapped his thigh.

"There ees onlee one theeng to do, mates. We mus' have a small amount o' that good game, *vingt et un*, zat game you call 'Black Jack.' *Allons*, let us go!"

About nine o'clock the boatswain stuck his head into the mess-room, where the players hunched over their cards.

"Ha-ha, th' gamboleers! You aint only small-timers, though, you wit' yer stevedorin' jack. Levi th' Russ went down th' dock an' showed th' scabbies he didn't believe in strike-breakin' by takin' some four hundred bucks away from 'em at stud. They was almost weepin' when he got through with 'em!"

Levi the Russ, his thick-featured face slightly flushed, pushed past the chattering boatswain and elbowed a place on the mess bench. He pounded the table with his fists.

"Gif me a card, Frenchy—I show you guys how to gamble—how Levi the Russ gamble!"

Frenchy looked askance at the formidable mound of bills in front of the Russian, then at his own rapidly diminishing hoard. Across the table from him, busied with stacking his last few bills, sat Cockney, keen eyes hidden behind the haze of smoke from his drooping cigaret. Frenchy put a slight note of appeal in his words—

"I sell de bank to de guy who will geef me five bucks for it!"

"Slide yer pack this w'y, me lad," said Cockney, pushing over a five dollar bill. With deft fingers he shuffled the dog's-eared deck. He placed his cigaret stub on the table guard and pulled back his jumper sleeves.

"Now, the Roosian says he warnts action—Well, well! There's a card fer every s'ilor, a card fer every s'ilor! We all crives action. Every card's an ace gents, an' ye'll need yer sky-hooks t' find th' limit! An eight t' you, Frenchy—an' a five on yer eight, Frenchy. Ah, we thanks you! Also Mister Levi—how we crives ten-buck bills!"

Gambling with astute but seemingly reckless abandon, the little Englishman swiftly drew the money in the game to join the heap growing before him. One after another the players withdrew from the game, minus their week's earnings. Levi the Russ, his wide, flat face expressionless, and "Chico," a Cubano fireman, remained in the game with the swift-fingered Cockney. The little Englishman lighted a fresh cigaret, looked around at the excited gallery who grouped behind Chico and Levi, then rippled the cards competently. He smiled into the bead-like eyes of the Russian, slapping the pack down in front of him.

"Cut, Levi—cut, fer every card's an ace!"

He slid the two cards across the mottled oil cloth face down and dealt one to himself. Lifting one corner, he squinted down at it. He rubbed his hands together and blew upon the palms.

"Now's th' charnce fer a come-back, Chico. Double yer bets, gents, double yer bets!"

Grumbling to himself, the swarthy fireman put his last two dollars on the card. Cockney flickered a quick glance toward the Russian. Levi, his mouth tautened in a grim line, was slowly piling all his remaining bills on the card. Frenchy Leros gulped audibly in spite of himself. There must be all of three hundred dollars in the mound of money on top of the Russian's card! Cockney took a farewell peek at his hole card, and flicked the nine of diamonds face up in front of the Cuban.

"Nine o' diamonds t' you, Chico. Another card? Got enough, aye? *Bueno!* 'Ere she comes, Rooski, every one pipin' 'ot!"

The Englishman bent over the deck of cards in his hands and faced toward the immobile Russian. With a quick swoop he slapped down the ten of spades on the board before Levi.

"Black Jack, py——" roared Levi the Russ. He uptilted his hole card to expose the ace of clubs.

"*Nom d'un papillon d'amour!*" gasped Frenchy Leros. Cockney had dealt the Russian the highest combination of cards in the game.

A glint of battle crept into the narrowed eyes of the Englishman. He upturned his own hole card to show the ace of hearts. The vast Russian rose to his feet and peered down, clenching and unclenching his hairy fingers, the onlookers pushing in tense silence behind him.

" 'Ere she goes, every card's an ace!" barked Cockney, and flipped up the ace of diamonds. The Englishman had now two aces with which to attempt to get a black-jack and equal the combination held by the Russian. For a long, nervous second the two players stood with eyes locked. Cockney motioned to the two aces. By the rules of the game he could play the two cards separately.

"Pl'y 'em apart, aye, Levi?"

"Yes," grunted the Russian.

Cockney flipped the top card from the deck and the Jack of Clubs fell beside the red diamond ace. He had duplicated the hand held by the Russian! He stared into the pig-eyes of the other. Levi glared back fixedly, motionless as a bronze statue.

"That puts us bow t' bow an' even as far as yer black-jack goes, Levi. I still got the 'eart ace. You wants that I pl'y on that ag'inst yer black-jack fer th' hull wad o' bills, eh, Levi?"

"Yes," said the Russian softly.

Cockney picked up the deck and fingered it lightly for a moment. With a swift gesture he snapped down the ten of diamonds on his heart ace.

"Oo-la-la!" whispered Frenchy faintly and staggered out of the mess-room. Cockney toyed with a corner of the heart ace for a moment.

"Two black-jacks t' yer one, Levi. I wins the wad, eh?"

Levi the Russ inclined his head.

"Yes."

Cockney scooped the wadded bills to him across the table. The Russian fumbled in his jumper pocket for his pipe. Cockney stared steadily at him as he stuffed the bills into his shirt. He smiled fleetingly.

"Levi— some guys is *loco* w'en they're drunk on bad Chilean booze. Others ain't got no use fer ships' articles, but blarst me ears if you didn't gamble like a s'ilor t'night!"

Cockney folded the last bill and put it with its fellows, then buttoned the pocket flap.

"Levi—I feels like a drink! W'it till I get me 'Lidy' an' you an' me'll go ashore fer some o' this bad American booze. Eh, Levi?"

The big Russian smiled slowly and nodded in response.

Frenchy Leros stole after them as they clumped down the dock to the gate.

Across the cobbles of the street the silent, grim lines of picketers prowled back and forth. Cockney and Levi the Russ slipped through the gate and the Englishman unsheathed the great machete, letting the blade glitter and reflect the rays of light from the big electric bulb over the gate.

The shining machete swinging from his hand, Cockney swaggered over the cobble-beside the hulking form of the great Russian. The line of picketers wavered for a moment, broke, and let the two men through, and the pair disappeared down the moonlit stretches of the street.

CAJUNS

by NEVIL HENSHAW

THE CAJUN loves to amuse himself at another's expense. If at the same time he can make a personal profit from his humor, he considers it a joke supreme.

Jomba was a pot-hunter. Thus, in his view of life, all creation came under the head of game. One day at the store he was talking shop.

"In my business," said he, "one must not guess. One must know. For example, when I go out on a hunt I know my charge of powder, the size of my shot, even the exact number of shot inside the shell."

This last, of course, was received with incredulous laughter. Jomba remained unmoved.

"So," said he. "You do not believe me. You would like to bet on it, then? If so, I will go out and shoot against the wall of this store. Afterward I will tell you the exact number of holes that you will find in the planks."

The bet was taken, the money put up. Seizing his gun, Jomba loaded it as he followed the others outside. At a distance of some twelve paces he took aim at the store wall. The gun gave the good honest bang that comes from black powder.

"You will find one hole," Jomba announced, as the smoke cleared away.

The others rushed forward. As Jomba had said, there was just one hole—a big, ragged hole through which a man could thrust a finger.

Jomba collected his bet.

"You see," said he. "It is as I told you. You guessed. I knew. And why? It was because, before coming into the store, I took my pocket-knife, and changed that charge of shot into a bullet by cutting a rim around the shell."

THE old Cajun of the Louisiana coast was a true child of nature. Lost in a wilderness of grass and water, he knew little of the simple civilization of the prairies beyond. In the winter he trapped; in the summer he fished. And, in between, he took his toll of the shrimp and game.

Save for brief visits to some country store, where he traded his catch, he seldom mingled with his fellow men. The low walls of the marsh bounded his farthest horizon. He knew no other world.

I know of an occasion when a doctor was sent for to see one of these folk. Rowing down to the sick man's camp, he found him in bad condition. What with fever and rheumatism, he was pretty far gone. It was evident that, should he stick to it, the marsh would finish him.

"Loronce," said the doctor," you are a sick man. You must go away for a while. Medicine will do you no good. It is this place that has got you. What you need is a complete change. Get clean out as soon as you can. It is the only thing you can do."

"*Bien,*" agreed Loronce, "me, I'll go tomorrow."

And he did. Loading his things in a pirogue, he paddled across the bayou to the opposite bank, where he visited the camp of his uncle.

The PRINTS OF HANTOUN

A Complete Novelette by T. S. Stribling

Author of "The Governor of Cape Haitien," "Cricket," etc.

IN FORT DE FRANCE, Martinique, Professor Henry Poggioli, American psychologist and criminologist, struck up a very pleasant friendship with the Chevalier Gervais Antoinette Beauhart Marian de Creviceau, a gentleman with a fellow interest in the philosophic aspects of crime.

The Chevalier de Creviceau, following the general temperament of the French in Martinique, elaborated innumerable theories about his hobby without putting one to the touchstone of investigation. He had become a theoretical spider spinning his web not to catch flies, but to indulge a passion for geometry.

So, at nine o'clock in the morning, while Fort de France lay under a downpour of sunshine already torrid, these two gentlemen sat at *dejeuner* at one of the little tables which had been placed on the wide pavement in front of the Hotel Coloniale discussing the highly theoretical question of how far the architectural surroundings of a people influenced their crimes.

The reason they had picked on this peculiar topic was that the street in which they sat spread before them a glare of multicolors which perhaps could not be duplicated anywhere else in the world. Some of the houses were painted in blazing blue and red bands, like a Brobdingnagian barber sign; the surface of others were enormous zig-zags of yellow and vermilion; some were struck off in diagonals of umber and orange. The whole street vibrated with these hot clashing colors and screwed up the impression of heat to a degree almost unbearable.

Poggioli, with his American flair for simplicity, suggested that this futuristic decoration would tend to produce crimes as bizarre and grotesque as the pied and streaked surroundings in which they were committed. But the Chevalier de Creviceau, with French subtlety, took exactly an opposite view. He held a theory analagous to that of Stanley Hall in "Adolescence:" Just as the vicarious criminal experience obtained during youth by novel reading tended to produce sober-minded men, so these clashing colors would tend to produce simplicity in the approach to life of all the Martiniquais whether criminal or normal members of society. He reinforced this opinion with humorous cleverness by declaring that the apocalyptic vision of St. John on Patmos described Heaven itself as a highly colored place not so very dissimilar to Fort de France.

"The Prints of Hantoun," copyright, 1925, by T. S. Stribling.

"Now," pursued the Chevalier with inexorable if fantastic logic, "if the seer of Patmos had not had some subconscious inkling of the soothing effects of a jangle of color, he would never have made so grave a mistake as to decorate Heaven with walls of jasper, pavements of gold, gates of pearl, ruby, topaz, chrysolite and so forth. *Ça, mon ami,*" he concluded, "compared to Heaven, Fort de France is a drab enough place, yet you would never agree that the abode of the blessed is a hotbed of crime. That would be nonsense!"

Professor Poggioli burst out laughing at this typical Martiniquean argument and said he would venture a hundred franc note against any such bizarre theory.

The Chevalier nodded a—

"Taken, m'sieu, but it will be difficult to determine such a matter through pure dialectic."

Now the American really had not intended laying a wager. He had merely followed the habit of his countrymen in strongly expressing his opinion in appealing to money where another nationality would have appealed to his sword, or his honor, or his God, but since the Chevalier had taken him literally, he was willing enough to carry out his wager.

"Suppose we investigate the next six crimes that come before the police court of Fort de France and see whether they are simple or complex."

The Chevalier de Creviceau was a carefully groomed triangular shaped man, and now he lifted black arched brows in a yellow triangular face.

"My friend, that will require exertion!"

"Quite so, but we must settle our wager."

"But six, that's too many; one crime is enough, the first."

Since the wager was trivial, Poggioli laughingly agreed to allow the very first crime to settle the discussion.

The Chevalier who launched a new theory at every turn of the conversation now began discussing the relative value of theory and practical tests.

"Now it is like this," he asserted, "I do not say there is nothing to actuality. I admit there is such a thing. It is just possible that without life we could develop no theories about it, but I hold with certainty that without theories life would be impossible; it would disintegrate into a series of accidents and fortuities. But to get back to our wager; when shall we begin this curious research?"

Here the Chevalier lifted his voice and asked the *garçon* to bring him a calendar, evidently to select a day, while Poggioli himself drew out a watch.

Whether the investigation should start by the calendar or the chronometer, would itself, no doubt, have been another point of long dispute had not at that moment the *garçon* come threading the tables to the two gentlemen and, with a little courteous salute, said in an undertone—

"M'sieu Poggioli, his honor, M. Percin, prefect of police, desires the favor of a few words with you over the telephone."

THIS timely message naturally put an end to the argument. The American hurried inside the hotel to the telephone booth and was gone for some thirty minutes because conversations in Martinique, whether by wire or face to face, are long drawn out affairs. After a while he reappeared in a state of obvious excitement, but at the same time laughing.

"What is it?" cried the Chevalier.

When Poggioli reached the table he said in a voice not to be heard by the other diners—

"The Banc Nacionale has been robbed!"

De Creviceau stared at this.

"Then why do you smile?"

Poggioli burst out laughing.

"Because M. Percin, the prefect of police, declared he and all his force were thrilled over the robbery and they would pursue with the utmost enthusiasm every clew to bring the robber to justice. They invited me to come down and help them."

The Chevalier lifted his arched brows.

"Frankly, I do not see why you smile over that?"

"Well—saying the police were thrilled over the robbery; and would pursue with the utmost enthusiasm—"

"*Ça!* Aren't you also thrilled!" cried the Chevalier, "I am!"

"Certainly," agreed Poggioli sobering, "but it sounds funny for the police department to talk of a robbery as if it were a theatrical performance put on for their benefit."

"My dear man, if there were no crimes there could be no law and no police. Crimes call the law and the police into existence.

I should say the greatest force for law and order in Martinique today are the criminals. And what is more thrilling to a professional man than an interesting case in his profession? A surgeon thrills over a rose cancer; a beach guard thrills to rescue a beautiful woman drowning in the sea; a policeman thrills to trace down and arrest a bank robber; that is, if they are Frenchmen!"

Poggioli now had stopped laughing completely.

"Well," he said soberly, "I told him I would come down at once and begged permission to bring you with me."

"Charmed! Thrilled!" cried the Chevalier reaching behind his chair to pick up a slender ivory cane made out of a narwhal's tusk.

So saying, the two gentlemen fell in at each other's side and, as the Chevalier elected to be pacemaker, they began a leisurely stroll through the streaked and striped streets of Fort de France toward the despoiled bank.

The Banc Nacionale, when the two investigators eventually reached this edifice, lifted a flaring checkered facade of ocher and sienna to the barbs of the sun. In front of the building a mob of Martiniquais milled about the entrance, crowded up the steps and stood jammed against its bronze doors. As the two gentlemen approached they could hear shouts of "Open the bank!" "Let us in!" "When does the bank open!" and a medley of a similar tenor.

The Chevalier de Creviceau paused and twirled his ivory cane.

"The news is out," he commented, "a run on the bank."

"How are we going to get inside?" queried the American quickening his steps, "we can't push through that mob."

De Creviceau surveyed the brilliant scene through wrinkled eyes.

"There must be some other entrance to the building."

"From the side perhaps?"

"Or the rear."

They went forward perusing the solid row of shops which flanked the edifice on both sides. Presently de Creviceau caught sight of a mere crack between two shops several doors down from the mob. The two investigators circled the crowd and trusted themselves to it.

The passage was typical of old West Indian towns; a foot and a half wide, malodorous, roofed over in places, widening here and there and winding about with the accidents of ownership and erratic building. In one place a kind of den had been curtained off with jute bagging and was occupied by a saggy-breasted yellow woman and three babies of different colors. At another turn, a long-headed sooty black negro wearing a tall red fez stood in a niche in the wall and sold rum in glasses made of broken bottles whose edges had been painstakingly smoothed. At a little distance beyond this was a donkey's stall; farther on a door made of sheet-iron, blackened with smoke and with a round hole cut in it. Past the door was a booth where a fat yellow negro sat surrounded by sacred pictures on cards, crucifixes, wax candles for votive offerings and rosaries. Beyond this the explorers saw a brilliant vertical streak where the passage opened into the sunlight again.

The Chevalier paused at the reliquary's stand and asked if there were a door to the bank in the alley outside.

The dealer in ecclesiastical properties shook his head vacantly.

"What bank, m'sieu?"

De Creviceau was irritated.

"Didn't you know there was a bank robbed last night?"

The reliquary crossed himself.

"God's distribution from the rich to the poor, m'sieus."

"A pious man," ejaculated the Chevalier, and the two men went on and looked out the end of the passage. They saw a street of hovels filled with stark naked children, greasy women and listless men. The houses were of *pisé* or *adobe*. There were shops in this meaner part of the city: Tailors, dealers in fire arms, a fish market with an amazing odor; all indescribably poverty ridden and squalid. Scrawled in charcoal at this end of the passage was its name—"Allee des Chats—" and the hideous thoroughfare before them was the "Rue des Quatre Vents." The two gentlemen might have been a thousand miles from Banc Nacionale, so puzzlingly are opulence and penury wedged together in the ancient town of Fort de France.

POGGIOLI turned back into the little alley, hopeless of finding the criminal in such a milieu. The two men retraced their steps by the reliquary, and as the American brushed against the iron door he paused and tapped it experimentally. Then, curious to see where such a door might lead, into some obscenity or other no doubt, he stooped and looked through the hole. After a moment's focussing of his eyes to a deeper gloom, he saw a pair of legs in dingy blue uniform. He peered in a little farther and found himself looking up almost under a negro guard seated on a stool.

The negro sensed his presence, jerked himself to attention, looked down at the American's head and blurted out—

"Is you M'sieu Poggioli?"

"Yes," ejaculated the American as surprized as his *vis à vis*. The black man jumped up in great excitement.

"Welcome, m'sieu!" he cried, jerking away his stool to admit the white man through the hole. Then he shouted up the passage or tunnel in which he stood:

"Messieurs! Ho Gentlemen! M'sieu Poggioli has arrived!"

Then he turned to assist the psychologist through the hole.

To meet such a reception committee in such a place amazed the psychologist. At the negro's uproar two men entered the passage from some door farther on and came hurrying down before Poggioli could fairly scramble out of the preposterous hole which had admitted him. In fact they helped him to his feet. The American arose flushed and rumpled to see two gentlemen, evidently French from their carefully tailored clothes and trimly cut hair; however, a certain slight crinkling of their hair suggested an infusion of African blood in their veins.

"M'sieu Poggioli!" cried one of these men seizing the American by the hand and shaking it with the nervous quickness of the Latin, "this is a propitious omen—" he turned to his companion—"it simply means, M'sieu le Presidente, that the thieves are captured and your money returned!" Then he remembered his duties and made a bow.

"M'sieu Poggioli, allow me to present the Presidente of the Banc Nacionale, M'sieu Pinville, and I am M. Percin, the prefect of police. I had heard you were in the city and, when this matter came up, I determined to avail myself of your brilliant talent as a criminologist."

The American shook hands.

"I had no idea this passage would lead to—"

M. Percin stuck up a gay forefinger and tipped his head to one side with a bright smile.

"My idea entirely, m'sieu. The question was: How would we ever get you into the bank. M. Pinville was afraid to open the front door for fear all Fort de France would rush in and perhaps break up the place if they did not get their money immediately. Now unfortunately their money is gone. M'sieu Pinville was distracted, 'Percin!' he cried, 'we are lost with rescue in sight! There is no way to admit the great American criminologist to Banc Nacionale!' 'Why could he not come in the same way the thief entered?' I demanded. 'Impossible to ask such a thing of a gentleman!' cried Pinville. 'Then don't ask it,' I cried, 'and if M'sieu l'Americain is the sleuth I think him he will presently appear at the hole under the wall!' Pinville was doubtful, but I placed Joub on guard with instructions to apologize to you the moment you showed your head. So here you are! Voila!" The prefect slapped fist in palm. "A magnificent beginning!"

They were starting back up the mean passage when Poggioli cried—

"One moment, gentlemen, my friend, the Chevalier de Creviceau is waiting outside."

"He is welcome!" cried M. Percin, "you spoke to me of him over the telephone."

"Yes, he came with me to settle a little wager."

"Joub, invite the gentleman in."

The negro guard thrust his head in the hole and called for the Chevalier to enter. Came a wait, then the Chevalier's yellow triangle of a head entered the aperture, but his broad straight shoulders could not enter at all. He pushed and twisted. The three gentlemen inside almost dislocated his arms but his big shoulders were incompressible. At last he grunted.

"When I knock—three times with my cane—on the front door—open and let me in."

M. Pinville flew up at once.

"Non, m'sieu, it is impossible! The bank will be looted!"

In the midst of this excited refusal, the Chevalier gave a great bang on the sheet-iron door with the head of his cane.

"When I rap three times like that on the front door of the bank, open and let me in," he repeated, "no one will enter with me," and his yellow head was instantly withdrawn.

The three men and the negro guard remained for a moment staring at the empty hole.

"Parbleu! a —— of a fellow!" ejaculated M. Pinville.

"I believe it will be safe to open and admit him," said the prefect, "I feel sure he will enter alone."

Then they turned up the passage for the interior of the bank.

They presently pushed up through a small trap door into a small cloak room of the Banc Nacionale.

"This building was once a roulette establishment," explained M. Percin, as the men helped each other out, "and you know in occupations of that character, m'sieus, a private exit or two is very necessary."

"They are no disadvantage to a bank either," seconded M. Pinville in a depressed tone, "except when they are criminally used, as this one was."

The group walked on into the accounting room of the bank, which appeared normal except for a hole cut in the big steel door of the vault. The sheet steel had been ripped from around the combination leaving exposed the shining inner bolts like the viscera of some animal as seen through a tear in its stomach.

"Who found this first?" asked Poggioli surveying the scene.

"Joub there who comes in early every morning to dust."

"Has anything been touched or moved?" inquired the American of the negro.

Joub shook his head with the rapid shake of a negro portentously serious.

"*Non, m'sieu.* When I saw this I called M. Pinville on the phone and he came down."

THE American looked at the layout more attentively. The vault door was a huge affair, imposing but quite out of date, whose steel sheets a modern burglar with an oxyacetylene torch could strip with the facility of a child peeling an onion. The safe inside the vault was of the same construction and had been treated in the same manner.

The floors of both the vault and the office were free from any litter of castaway books or papers, but in a waste basket was a single folded newspaper. The psychologist picked this up, unfolded it and displayed a burnt looking dust and a number of burnt match ends and cigaret stubs. He stood looking at the contents a moment and presently observed that the burglar whoever he was had a very interesting psychology indeed.

M. Pinville, whose money was gone, made a little annoyed gesture at so abstract a subject, but the prefect inquired with interest—

"What do you make of him?"

"First, I should say this burglar was a very fastidious amateur—"

The prefect threw up his hands.

"Parbleu, m'sieu!" he cried. "Amateur! Certainly he is a professional! Why that circle of steel is cut out of the vault door with the precision of a compass."

"Yes, but look at the time he spent on the job," retorted Poggioli, motioning toward the cigaret stubs.

"Time—how do you deduce a time factor in—"

"By the number of cigarets the gentleman used while burning a hole in the vault door."

The prefect looked at the stubs a little vacuously.

"Weren't they left by the paying teller from yesterday?"

"No, all the other waste baskets are empty; I fancy Joub disposed of them yesterday evening."

"I did, m'sieu," nodded the negro.

"But why should a thief waste time disposing of his stubs in a waste basket?"

"Because he is an aristocrat and a highly fastidious and finical man. Also I can say that he is a perfectly phlegmatic person. For instance when a man starts burning a hole through a vault door, spreads a paper to catch the particles of burned steel, spends an extra forty minutes to make his circle perfectly round, when he pinches out his cigaret stubs, I call him highly phlegmatic and highly finical. In fact his only sign of nerves was that he grew so absorbed in his labors that he allowed his cigarets to die between his lips. You see here are more than a dozen like that. He forgot to draw. Now since keeping a cigaret alive is pure automatism, we may conclude that his nerves were a little ruffled although I suspect he would be the first to deny it. In person the burglar is very carefully attired, since he was so neat in his robbery. He is very probably a man of wealth, since he was so wasteful of these very fine imported cigarets. He is very probably a man of luxury who has recently lost his money, since this certainly was his first effort to rob a bank."

Here the prefect interrupted to ask explosively why the psychologist thought it was a first effort since it was so eminently successful.

"From the length of time it required for him to cut the door. Here are twenty-one cigarets, nineteen of which have been given a puff or two and then allowed to die. It requires about three minutes for a cigaret to expire. There are sixty minutes accounted for. We can easily add three more minutes to each stub as the time the burglar worked on holding the dead tobacco between his lips. There is another hour. Now for any man to work two hours at this job, shows he was not only an amateur, but a beginner. He should have done it in thirty minutes."

"But why did he turn out such a perfect piece of work?"

"Because he is the sort of man who performs every task with a very deliberate perfection. He must be, in fact, a *capre,* that is, of mixed French and negro blood. He has inherited the perfect finish of the French with the patient slowness of the negro."

M. Pinville shrugged hopelessly.

"That is about as definite, M'sieu Poggioli, as to say a certain frog you were seeking in a marsh had web feet—everything in Martinique is some sort of mixture of French and Negro, except my family, and—and M. Percin's family, and—one or two others—"

The prefect made a little bow at his inclusion in the banker's list, while Poggioli said:

"At least M. Pinville, if my deductions are correct, the burglar was no poor man. Frankly I was very discouraged when I saw the Rue des Quatre Vents. If it had been some one out of that scum, I should have been hopeless. I don't know the psychology of the miserable, I am an American."

"How shall we proceed now?" inquired the prefect briskly.

"I think we should make a list of the employees of this bank."

At this suggestion President Pinville was startled.

"My own employees!"

"The character of the robbery suggests it— Was the secret passage which leads from the bank to the alley known to all your men?"

"I can't say, m'sieu." Pinville looked worried. "It was no secret, but I don't suppose it was mentioned once in ten years. I knew the passage was there, just as I know there is an old water spigot in the corner of my private office which was used for something when this building was run as a lottery and a gambling house, but I never have any reason to thick of or mention the matter."

"It won't be amiss," suggested M. Percin, "to take a list of the bank employees and have my city detectives investigate the personal habits of each one."

The president went to this desk and began making out a list of his clerks, pausing now and then to bite his pen over a street address which he could not instantly recall.

As he did this, Poggioli continued moving about the office, scrutinizing the safe, its exposed bolts, and finally he stooped and picked up from the floor a small brown button. He interrupted the men at the desk to exclaim.

"By the way, gentlemen, it is hardly worth while to make out the list of the bank clerks."

M. Percin turned.

"Why do you say that, you have described the psychology of a finical bank clerk exactly."

"On account of this button," said the American holding up the tiny object. "It is a glove button. The thief evidently burst it off his glove in some manipulation of his tools. This shows that he was not only a fastidious man but an extremely scientific one. You see he was clever enough to wear gloves throughout his work to avoid leaving finger prints on the steel."

M. Percin made a sharp blow in the air.

"*Donc!* How unfortunate! M'sieu, I have made a specialty of finger prints. I have thousands of finger prints. Every person who passes through the courts of Fort de France, I have his finger print record. Now for this burglar to avoid leaving any prints! That is too bad!"

The prefect twisted his hands together and displayed other signs of agitation at this downfall of his hobby when the three men were startled by three booming raps on the front door.

"Voila! The Chevalier!" cried M. Percin. "I had forgot him!"

And the trio rushed to the entrance of the bank.

AT THE door President Pinville stood for a fluttering moment of indecision, when the three great knocks boomed again. Then he unlocked the door and meant to inch it open a little way, but instantly both shutters were flung wide open by the Chevalier outside and in marched two villainous negroes and a slatternly woman all convoyed by the Chevalier himself. The mob had been cleared from the steps and now stood at a respectful distance watching this performance in silence.

M. Pinville hastily reclosed the doors. The men in the bank looked at the newcomers in astonishment. At last M. Percin queried—

"Are these preferred creditors, m'sieu?"

"Riff-raff I found in the alley," explained the Chevalier. "I thought we would need their testimony to see what sort of man broke into the bank last night. I wanted to decide a little wager I made with M'sieu Poggioli."

Here de Creviceau made a courteous gesture toward the psychologist inviting him to interrogate the witnesses.

M. Percin immediately made a note of the names and occupations of these troglodytes out of the runway of "Cats' Alley." The woman was Sylvia Gerrerd, by profession a woman of the streets. The sooty rum-seller was Bimbo Allemaro, a negro of the French Congo who had immigrated to Martinique; while the mulatto reliquary was Henry LeTour, a descendant, he assured M. Percin, of Archbishop LeTour, spiritual father of the Cathedral of Fort de France.

"How came a man of your lineage selling sacred pictures in the Allee des Chats?" inquired Percin.

"Ah, your excellency," cried the mulatto, "I am very well placed indeed. When a man passes through the hands of Madame Gerrerd, M'sieu Allemaro and M'sieu Jevrat, he finds himself in need of spiritual comfort, so I sell him a candle to burn to the saints. The Archbishop, my uncle, and I are, you might say, collaboraters."

"This Jevrat," inquired Poggioli at once, "who is he? I didn't see him as I came through the alley."

"No, he is never in during the day. He goes out sharpening knives and mending tins all day long, at least so he says."

"And what does he do at night?"

The Archbishop's grandson hesitated. "M'sieu, I do not want to cast any unjust suspicions on a good man; a spiritual minister attached even remotely to the cloth must guard his tongue."

"Come, come," reproved M. Percin, "you are no priest, M. LeTour; the law does not hold inviolate confessions made to you. What does M. Jevrat do at night?"

LeTour was a little frightened at this tone.

"I think—to be plain, your excellency, my impression was that Jevrat was a—well, I was careful not to change any piece of money he offered me."

"A coiner!" ejaculated the prefect.

LeTour shrugged and spread his hands:

"That was merely my impression, your excellency; his forge was going all night long, and then in the day he would be out, mending tins and sharpening knives, so he said, but I fancied he was changing his money for something better."

At this M. Percin was seriously angered:

"M. LeTour, why did you not report such a serious offence? This is no peccadillo, debasing the coinage!"

"Your Excellency," replied LeTour with a certain spirit, "I attempt to look at this matter from the standpoint of the church. The world is unequally divided between the rich and the poor. The rich have mints, the poor have coiners. The only way the poor can obtain a ten louis piece, for example, is to make it themselves. The fact that they can not afford to make their ten louis pieces out of gold is their misfortune, they are poor—" here the reliquary shrugged again—"but they should be allowed to do the best they can. I would not have reported this M. Jevrat under any circumstances. I attempt to look at this matter from the standpoint of our holy church."

M. LeTour was so obviously summoning his spiritual fortitude to play the rôle of martyr that the prefect gave up his heckling.

"Where did this M. Jevrat have his forge, m'sieu?"

"At an old iron door in the side of the alley. He cut a hole in it for his smoke to escape."

The four men were alert at once.

"Describe this Jevrat!" cried Poggioli.

The reliquary looked at the psychologist in surprize.

"He was a hunchback, m'sieu, a smallish man, always very neat in his clothes—"

The prefect waggled a confirming finger at this word "neat."

"The same man, M'sieu Poggioli!"

"Sharp-faced," went on the reliquary, "he wore a gray English suit, tailored to fit his hump, and a hat made of the same cloth, a gray tie—"

"Quite a toff," suggested the prefect.

The reliquary shrugged—

"He could very well be—in his trade."

"And you have no idea where he stayed during the day?"

"No-o, m'sieu," pondered LeTour thoughtfully.

"Never an inkling of his daily associations outside of Cats' Alley?"

"I had an idea, m'sieu, that he took his meals in some rather fine cafe."

"What gave you that impression?"

"A very trifling thing, m'sieu; you will think slightly of it, perhaps?"

"Tell me and I will decide."

"The songs he hummed when he worked."

The four gentlemen were indeed surprized at this quirk, and Poggioli took up the interrogatory. He asked how Jevrat's songs suggested a fine café.

"Because he never hummed or whistled the same tune twice, m'sieu, and then they were always what they call classical music. Now an ordinary laborer hums only two or three such songs at most, but M'sieu Jevrat never repeated, so I decided he remembered the last tunes he heard and that he dined at some stylish café here in the city which had an orchestra."

"A shrewd observation to make!" exclaimed the prefect admiringly.

LeTour shrugged modestly.

"I even went a little further than that, your excellency."

"Go on, what else did you observe?"

"A few days ago, three days to be exact, M. Jevrat came to his forge in exceptionally gay spirits. A smile wrinkled his sharp face all night long but strange to say, that evening he was humming the 'Stabat Mater' and a 'Te Deum.' I called to him—

" 'M'sieu, Jevrat, you have attended a funeral today.'

" 'That is true,' he admitted, 'how did you guess it, *mon pere?*' The whole of Cats' Alley calls me '*mon pere*' because of my occupation.

" 'I guessed it,' said I, liking to be as mysterious to him as he was to me, 'Also, I can tell you, M. Jevrat, this person whom you buried today was a wealthy kinsman of yours and has left you a fortune.'

"He looked me straight in the eyes and said—

" 'Pere LeTour, you are a wonderful man.'

" 'That,' said I, declining a compliment as becomes a nephew of the cloth, 'is as it may be, but if I were you, I would give up my coining now that I have come into a fortune and I would be a gentleman all night long as well as all day long.'

"He stared at me harder than ever and said—

" 'Your advice is excellent—have you a son?'

" 'None that I know of,' said I.

" 'Then if you wish to leave a noble line to honor your uncle, the Archbishop, I would suggest that you cease commenting on my activities, Pere LeTour.' "

The reliquary shrugged.

"He did not frighten me, but I am a man of peace by profession; so that is one reason, your excellency, why I have never mentioned the fellow's occupation to a human soul."

"I see your viewpoint," nodded the prefect. He turned to Poggioli. "M'sieu, here is another clew tossed up. If we get a list of the deaths of the last week, select the rich ones and investigate their legatees, we may find a humpbacked man who wears a gray suit."

The psychologist stood thinking over this curious story told by the reliquary; finally he said—

"By the way, M. LeTour, do you happen to have inherited a musical ear through your illustrious uncle?"

LeTour spread his hands deprecatingly—

"So-so."

"Are you at all familiar with the tunes M. Jevrat hummed on the different nights, and if possible could you recall them in the order they came?"

"M'sieu," said the dealer in ecclesiastical properties, "I make no boast and exhibit no pride because that would be out of place in a descendant of the cloth, but—the Archbishop of Fort de France is my grandfather."

"Then you would oblige me greatly by making a list of the different tunes this Jevrat hummed while he was at work counterfeiting money."

"That will require some concentration."

"We will furnish you a desk, pen and paper; you may ponder as long as you will while we proceed with our investigation of the bank vault."

At this all three of the other gentlemen burst out—

"Really, M. Poggioli—" from M. Pinville—"music—how do you hope to link up the tunes this man was humming with the return of my money?"

Chevalier de Creviceau protested:

"M'sieu, I object. You are making an unnecessary mystery of this; you are giving it an air of bewilderment, merely to suggest the crime was complex and win your wager."

The prefect interpolated—

"M. Poggioli, I agree that the sort of music a bank robber sings suggests the sort of fellow he is, but really to write out his programs; that is carrying the matter beyond the practical, that is sheer Anglo-Saxon mysticism."

"Humor my whim, gentlemen," cajoled Poggioli in good spirits, "remember I am a psychologist as well as criminologist, it will be instructive to learn exactly what arias stick in a criminal's brain on the eve of a great coup. We were arguing, Chevalier, the influence of architecture on crime; who has investigated the influence of music on crime? It is quite possible that some tunes incite robbery, some murder, others assault. If we could learn this, we might formulate laws forbidding certain airs and thus protect the morals of the people."

"Spoken like an American!" cried the prefect laughing. "And if you spread that idea in the United States, Lord help the Metropolitan Opera Company of New York!"

All the gentlemen laughed at this thrust, except M. Pinville who had lost his money. Poggioli declared he was through with the witnesses just as soon as the Archbishop's nephew made out the list.

"I would like to suggest something to simplify this crime," said the Chevalier, "since my friend, the psychologist, who has a wager up on the result, has done so much to complicate it."

"Certainly, that's your privilege," declared the prefect.

"I think you gentlemen will agree that M'sieu Poggioli has been trying to give this affair just as mysterious a twist as he possibly could."

"I agree with you heartily," cried M. Pinville, who was evidently getting out of patience.

"I think the prefect should allow me to enter the robbed vault and see if I cannot make something very simple and straightforward out of the crime."

"My dear friend, you are more than welcome!" cried the prefect.

"Gentlemen," protested Poggioli, vaguely offended at this speech, "I assure you I am much more interested in catching the robber than I am in proving any theory or winning any wager."

"Spoken like a gentleman!" cried the prefect. "Chevalier, you are welcome to look into the gutted vault."

"May I inquire?" asked the Chevalier politely, "if you gentlemen have developed the bright knob of the combination with a view to finding out what were the last finger prints impressed upon it."

"The combination knob is torn away," said the prefect.

"Blown out?" queried the Chevalier.

"Cut out," said the prefect, "just step in and observe for yourself."

As the group walked to the bank vault again, Poggioli put in with a faint note of triumph in his tones,

"Your simple criminal, Chevalier, was at least too clever to leave finger traces; he used gloves as all up to date crooks do nowadays."

"How do you know that?" asked de Creviceau in surprize.

"I found a glove button on the floor which he burst off in using his tools."

The Chevalier looked thoughtfully at Poggioli:

"That is a very slight proof, m'sieu."

"It doesn't require *much* proof to prove anything, Chevalier, it requires only positive proof; and that is positive that the burglar wore gloves."

The triangular gentleman shrugged, twitched his ivory cane and by that time the men were at the vault door again. De Creviceau looked at the exposed bolts in the great steel shutter with his hands and cane held conspicuously together behind his back. After peering for about a minute, he said—

"I think I can refute Professor Poggioli's theory without the aid of any developing mixture to bring out the finger prints."

"How?" asked the prefect.

"The bolts have been oiled some time ago. A very faint viscid film of oil is over them. I believe I can actually see with my unaided eyes the prints of two or three fingers."

"Is it possible!" cried the prefect striding to the Chevalier's side, "if that is true, then I have the culprit if he has ever been before a court in Fort de France."

"There it is, look carefully on that bolt."

The prefect looked; in fact all the men were staring into the open mechanism of the vault. Sure enough on the palish yellow film could be seen the faint impressions of the balls of human fingers.

The Chevalier chuckled briefly.

"M'sieu Poggioli, doesn't that allay at least three-fourths of your aura of mystery about this crime?"

"Allay it!" cried the psychologist staring at the bolts, then at the men. "Why it deepens it a hundred, a thousand fold, Chevalier, can't you see that!"

"I do not," retorted the Chevalier.

"How is it possible!" cried the prefect.

"Because," explained the psychologist crisply, as if he were demonstrating a theorem to his class back in the Ohio State University, "you observe, gentlemen, here we have two flatly contradictory pieces of evidence. A glove button on the floor; finger prints on the bolts. The robber wore gloves—yet he left finger prints. How is it possible that he did both; there is the hiatus you must bridge!"

"But perhaps," cried the Chevalier, "this robber had worn holes through the fingers of his gloves!"

"Impossible, he was a fastidious man; also his liberty depended on the integrity of his gloves."

"Perhaps that was a button from the glove of one of my clerks," suggested Pinville.

"Joub has swept out the bank since yesterday afternoon. Besides a bank clerk never wears gloves at work."

"Perhaps the robber pulled off his gloves after he got to work?" from M. Percin.

"As likely a soldier pull off his gas mask in a gas attack."

"Well, what do *you* make of it?" cried the Chevalier.

"I don't know what theory to advance. I will have to develop some hypothesis which will embrace these two paradoxical discoveries."

The Chevalier began laughing.

"I see what you make of it."

"What?"

"A deeper mystery than ever, and—a win of your wager?"

"Precisely my reaction," declared Poggioli with pedagogic curtness.

The prefect interrupted good-humoredly—

"You will excuse me, M'sieu Poggioli, if I go ahead and use these finger prints precisely as if there were no mystery attached to them?"

"Oh certainly," assured Poggioli, now a little ashamed of his heat after the suavity of M. Percin. "That is what I want you to do, m'sieu."

Thereupon the prefect called for a wrench, which Joub produced, and set about removing the bolts without smudging the faint traces which could be seen upon them. At the same time the reliquary arose from the desk which had been assigned him and handed Poggioli a list of about twelve musical numbers. Poggioli thanked the Archibishop's nephew.

The prefect said—

"Well, we will see which develops the criminal first, m'sieu; your program of music or these finger prints."

FIFTEEN minutes later, Poggioli, the prefect and the Chevalier had removed the tell-tale bolts from the safe and were on their way with them to M. Percin's residence where the officer kept his private finger print collection of the criminals of Martinique.

As the trio skimmed through the streets, Poggioli sank back in the cushions of his taxi, staring at the harlequin houses and musing on the contradictory proposition that the burglar of Banc Nacionale both did and did not wear gloves.

Such a thesis, of course, was a blank impossibility; the psychologist's reflections broke against it futilely. His brooding was presently diverted by a lively and typically French discussion which had sprung up between his two companions.

"As a matter of fact," the Chevalier was saying in his detached tones, "the law does not forbid bank robbery, or indeed any sort of crime, M'sieu Percin."

"The statutes then are very misleading, Chevalier," smiled the prefect in friendly satire.

"They suffer from lack of precision in expression, as do most human utterances," said the Chevalier.

"It seems fairly clear to me when the law says a man shall go to prison for twenty years if he robs a bank."

"But does he?"

"Certainly, if he is caught!" cried the prefect.

"Ah, there you are! If he is caught. Observe the conditional clause; even so stupid an aggregation as a body of law-makers must have borne that in mind."

"Naturally," shrugged the prefect.

"But don't you see that changes the whole face of the proposition. Now analyze what is the whole complete idea behind a bank robbery. It comprehends not only the cracking of a safe and the appropriation of funds, but also the use of those funds for the robber's enjoyment, and the robber's ultimate escape from retribution; that is the whole outline of action in the robber's mind is it not?"

"Why certainly, but—"

"And anything less is really an incomplete robbery?"

"Possibly, but—"

"So you see at once, all the law really forbids are incomplete robberies. A genuinely successful robbery lies quite outside the law. It is impossible to forbid a man anything when there is no power to enforce the prohibition. Therefore we may say the law is directed at bunglers, nincompoops, pretenders to the purple. When you come to refine it down to its last and subtlest social analysis, m'sieu, the function of the law is not to thwart or discourage criminals at all, but to perfect and refine them. The constabulary of a country is really a university, paradoxically supported by the crowd-mind for the perfection of a few individualists. It is the ultimate triumph of the aristocracy over the Demos."

Poggioli glanced at the man who was airing such peculiar sentiments. The Chevalier's yellow face held the utmost seriousness; in fact there was almost a fanatical air about the fellow.

The prefect who was also staring now burst into a great laugh.

"*Sacre bleu,* what a wag! M'sieu Poggioli, did you ever hear such a man?"

The Chevalier hesitated a moment and then joined the prefect in his mirth.

The taxi driver drew up before a curb and the men got out in front of the prefect's residence. They entered a gate and M. Percin led the way around by the side of his house through a yard decorated with tropical trees. They entered a wing of the house and Poggioli found himself in a single long room completely filled with cabinets for filing cards.

"Now," cried the prefect, holding the steel bolt carefully by the ends, "all that is necessary is to place this steel in a good light and then run through my finger print collection and find prints to match these on the bolt."

Poggioli looked at the cabinets in despair.

"Run through this whole collection!"

"Oh, no, I am French, this is all arranged with the greatest care and science. I will soon sift this print down to a single file, and I'll finish in an hour or two."

Here he placed his bolt on a wooden rack in a window, picked up a large magnifying glass and began examining it.

The Chevalier de Creviceau stood by, greatly interested in this phase of criminal research; but Poggioli did not want to waste his time in mere watching. He told the two men he would go back to town and occupy himself with the musical end of the clew, and they could communicate with him if they discovered anything.

M. Percin nodded abstractedly.

"As you will, *mon ami,* and good luck."

The psychologist retraced his steps through the tropical lawn and found the taxi still waiting at the gate; for where American taxis have to be told to wait, Martiniquais must be told to go. For once, Poggioli was grateful for this somewhat expensive custom, climbed into the car and signalled the driver to be off.

"Where to?" asked the fellow.

Poggioli pondered.

"I don't know exactly—what cabarets have the best music in the city, m'sieu?"

"The Chat Noir," nodded the chauffeur at once.

"Then to the Chat Noir."

As the fellow leaped out to crank his antiquated machine, Poggioli bethought himself.

"By the way, what sort of music do they have at the Chat Noir?"

"American jazz," cried the taxi-driver enthusiastically, "magnificent music!"

Poggioli shook his head.

"I perceive, m'sieu, your uncle was not an archbishop."

The driver stared at his fare astonished:

"Nobody knows, m'sieu—my aunt is dead."

"I feel that he was not an archbishop," repeated Poggioli. "Mention some hotel in town where the music is solemn, at least serious."

The motor now rattled away as the driver scratched his head.

"I can take you to the Petit Palais, m'sieu, but you are an American tourist, and I advise you frankly, as man to man, that you can get drunker in less time at the Chat Noir than you can at the Petit Palais."

"Everything has its advantages," acknowledged Poggioli, "but let us get to the Petit Palais as quickly as possible."

And he settled back in his cab to decide on some method to pursue in this nebulous clew of M. Jevrat's music.

AS POGGIOLI reentered the rainbow business section of Fort de France, he drew out the paper M. LeTour had given him and was disheartened to see, not the titles of M. Jevrat's whistlings and hummings, but the actual musical themes themselves crudely jotted down on the paper. Each day was jotted down on this calendar with a musical theme after it. It was a kind of musical diary; or to be more exact, a musical noctuary kept on the bank robber by the archbishop's grandson.

The idea of attempting to trace a mysterious crime through this striped and dappled city by the aid of crudely scrawled musical scores, struck Poggioli with its *bizarrerie.* Where under heaven, except among the French, would a man find himself resorting to such grotesque expedients?

At the Petit Palais, Poggioli asked the manager where he could find the musicians who put on the dinner programs for his café. The manager, a genial little man, almost a full-blooded Frenchman, gave the psychologist a list of seven names; two singers, a harp, violin and flute trio, and two orchestra conductors. One of the singers was a Mademoiselle Helois Becquard, 14 Rue Chantilly.

The psychologist reasoned that any man whose nerves were constantly on the alert, as a criminal's would be, and who possessed a passion for music, would most likely be moved by so sensuous a delight as a woman singer. This bit of reasoning gave Poggioli a peculiar thrill of certainty, so he got back to his cab with gusto and called out—

"Fourteen Rue Chantilly, and move along lively, *s'il vous plait.*"

He hurtled off again and fifteen minutes later halted before a chateau done in pink stucco, and on the lawn in front of it stood a plaster figure of a girl with a guitar which was painted in colors the artisan mistakenly believed to be natural.

A ring at the bell brought out a coal-black maid who ushered the American into a music room which was in extraordinary disarray. Poggioli stood in the midst of this chaos when Mademoiselle Becquard entered in a rose morning gown, still tucking in a wisp of her jet-black shining hair. She was the sort of young woman who "carried well" across the footlights; in private she was pretty enough, but wore too aggressive an air to promote comfort in others.

Poggioli presented his card.

"I have come, mademoiselle, to ask you about your singing."

"I don't sing jazz," stipulated this dinner *diva* at once.

"So I was informed—that's why I came here."

Mademoiselle Becquard warmed to her caller at once.

"M'sieu, it is a pleasure to hear you say that. The bourgeoisie here in our island; what musical taste! No soul, no escaping the flesh into the universe of pure music." The Mademoiselle laid a small hand on her full bosom which mounded under the rose gown, and then added casually, still holding her pose, "I am usually paid two hundred francs a night."

"I am not an impresario," corrected Poggioli, "I have ventured to come here, mademoiselle, to ask you about a certain program you have already given."

Here mademoiselle became a little more attentive to Poggioli himself, looking at him with a certain appraising light in her black eyes.

"Have you heard me sing, m'sieu?" She

lifted her carefully plucked black brows with a touch of commercialized coquetry.

"To what dining places could I go to hear you sing regularly, mademoiselle; a man of taste likes to avoid the clap-trap," he added diplomatically.

This did pique the woman's interest; usually men heard her sing and then begged to see her at home, this fellow saw her at home and begged to know where she sang.

"Gentlemen like you are the hope of Martinique, m'sieu," she declared in a moved tone, "but don't let me keep you standing. Let's sit here on this sofa." She preceded him to a wide brocaded seat at a French window and sank on it surrounding him with an aura of heavy perfume.

"Let me see, I sing at the Chatillon, the Empire, the Italienne, the Republique—also I sing to my friends here at home."

Poggioli drew out his list of themes and spread the paper on his knees.

"You are charming. And now I have rather an odd question to ask: Does it happen that recently you have sung any of these airs at the places you mention?"

The singer looked at the crude scores in some surprize.

"Who copied these, m'sieur?"

"An archbishop's nephew."

"An archbishop's—"

Mademoiselle Becquard burst out laughing.

"You're a wag," she reproved gaily, hitting his arm, "well, he did it badly enough. Let me see what is this first one—Tra la, la," she lifted her full bosom slightly to go over the score *sotto voce*.

"*Ça*, that isn't a song at all, m'sieu, it's the prelude to the 'Jongleur de Notre Dame.' "

"That's what I wanted you to do," said Poggioli, "pick out in this list any song you have sung within the last two weeks."

"Why is this, m'sieu?" asked the singer curiously, "frankly I don't see where this leads to?"

Poggioli burst into a laugh.

"Mademoiselle, pick out the songs you sang and tell me where you sang them—it will settle a wager."

"A wager!"

"Oui, mademoiselle."

The woman studied him a moment and then shrugged.

"I don't mind obliging you, but you are not doing this on a wager."

She started humming down the list, and presently—

"I sang this at the Empire, this at the Italienne, and—oh this, it is a song I sang at Hotel Coloniale night before last by special request."

"Who requested it?"

"I don't recall—he wrote me a note."

"Have you the note?" asked the psychologist with a faint thrill of excitement.

"Oui, m'sieu, here it is."

Mademoiselle Becquard thrust an impulsive hand into her bosom and fished for a moment. She drew out a pink envelope on which was written in a strong odd handwriting, "To the Prima Donna."

Poggioli reached for the envelope, but the Becquard withheld it.

"M'sieu, you didn't write this note?"

"No."

"Then you must really tell me why you want it. You might do my unknown admirer some injury with it."

Poggioli was now trembling to see the note.

"Is there a name signed to it?"

"Certainly, m'sieu."

"Then tell me who it is?"

"*Non, non, m'sieu,*" she denied him with French rapidity, "not until you tell me truly what you want with it."

"Listen," cried Poggioli, deciding to risk the truth with her, "The Banc Nacionale has been robbed."

"Oui," nodded the woman opening her eyes, "my maid told me that."

"I have this curious clew to the robber's identity—the music he loved."

"Ah, the robber was musical—how romantic, m'sieu!"

"Yes, but the point is on the very night of the robbery, he came home singing the song you sang at the Hotel Coloniale, so it is barely possible he is the man who sent you this note, that is why I want to see his name."

For answer the girl swung up and away from the sofa and in the same instant tore the note in two.

"I betray a man who risks his life singing my songs, m'sieu! Nevaire! He has a soul! I wish I could see him! Oh, how often I have wished I could see such a man!"

Poggioli sprang after the woman who was jerking the note to pieces with fingers trained to piano rapidity.

"You imbecile, you are aiding and abetting a criminal!" cried the American.

"I am aiding a fellow lover of the beautiful!" screamed the singer, more than willing to make a scene of it. "I am aiding a soldier of fortune! How I wish he had come to me himself! How I could have loved such a man!"

"You're insane!" cried Poggioli, "I'll take you before the prefect and make you tell his name!"

"I don't know it!"

"He'll make you tell!"

"But I don't!" she screamed, "I get dozens of such requests; I don't memorize them!"

"Well, —— your anti-social reactions!" cried the psychologist, trembling from frustration.

For answer the woman flung the note at him in a shower of confetti and made a dramatic gesture showing Poggioli out of the room.

THE American went out, got back to his waiting cab and snapped out at his chauffeur—

"To the Coloniale, quick!"

And he rode back to town with nerves on edge at the narrow margin he had missed getting the name of the robber point blank.

Before the glowing checkered façade of the Hotel Coloniale, Poggioli got out, paid off his driver and went inside. His plan now was to interview the *garçons* of the establishment and see if one of them could remember taking a note to Mademoiselle Becquard on the preceding night. He went up to the clerk's desk which was deserted as usual. He glanced about the vacant place and was about to ring when he observed a note lying on the counter directed to the clerk. He was on the verge of ringing when a certain peculiar backhand slant to the writing on the note caught his attention. He glanced around the empty lobby with a twinge of academic guilt, then picked up the note and read it. It was a simple request for a porter to be sent to room thirty-six. It was unsigned, but it was in the same handwriting which he had seen on the note in Mademoiselle Becquard's music room.

Poggioli studied the queer handwriting a moment longer, then his heart began beating and he started up-stairs to room thirty-six.

On the second floor, he lost himself. In Martinique the rooms on the different floors are not numbered by the hundreds. The whole of a hotel is a higgledy-piggledy assemblage of rooms, numbered in the order in which they were built, no matter where that happened to be. The result was if a man found thirty-five in one end of the house that was no hint that thirty-six was in the neighborhood. Amid his perplexity Poggioli at last found a maid who directed him amid a labyrinth of halls and finally showed him thirty-six.

Poggioli tipped her, bowed and thanked her away, then tapped on the door. Nobody answered. He tried the bolt, but it was locked. He placed shoulder to the flimsy shutter, and after a few silent rams it came open.

The moment Poggioli stepped into the room he became aware of a faint peculiar odor of decay. The windows were thrown open, and even the tenant's trunks were open and his clothing scattered about the bed and chairs as if to present everything to the air. This last gave Poggioli the impression the occupant meant to leave the hotel soon. The request in the note to the clerk for a porter was evidently for a man to remove his baggage. The clothes and underwear in the room showed their owner to be a man of fastidious taste. The puzzling feature was the smell. Such an odor in the room of a Beau Brummel scotched the American. He looked for its origin. His nose led him to a little round table in the corner of the room. This table appeared perfectly clean; on it lay a bachelor's sewing outfit; a diminutive pair of tailor's shears and a bottle of yellow liquid. A label stated its contents as tannic acid.

The whole outfit was a riddle; a man who affected silken haberdashery would hardly repair his own clothing, nor would he have any use for a pint of tannic acid. Such an acid did not go to the making of explosives so would hardly be helpful in vault cracking.

The criminologist stood with the bottle in his hand absorbed in the riddle it posed when he was painfully startled by a voice in the room ejaculating—

"Thank ——, I've found you at last!"

The American whirled and saw the Chevalier de Creviceau standing in the doorway. The black eyes in the yellow triangular head stared at him. The newcomer went on hurriedly—

"A maid said I would find you in room thirty-six—is this your room?"

"No it isn't, de Creviceau," replied Poggioli in a swift undertone, "I have every reason to believe it belongs to the man who robbed the Banc Nacionale!"

The Chevalier glanced around the room curiously.

"That's fantastic, the prefect has just located the criminal's finger prints definitely. I wonder if you've found the same man?"

"He has!"

"Yes, he told me to hurry and find you, he wants to consult with you."

"I think we'd better wait for the return of the occupant of this room."

The Chevalier de Creviceau stared at Poggioli and then burst out laughing.

"I think your end of the clew is incorrect, m'sieu."

"Why?"

"Because the occupant has returned."

"He has!" cried the American at sea.

"Yes, he is with you now; this is my room."

A rather keen embarrassment swept over Poggioli—

"Why did you ask me if it were my room?" he ejaculated flushing.

The Chevalier de Creviceau shrugged and spread a palm.

"That was more polite than to say, 'M'sieu Poggioli, what are you doing in my room?' It gave you a chance to explain without embarrassment. And you must excuse the condition of my apartment," went on the Chevalier smoothly. "I was trying a little chemical experiment and got a nasty odor in my rooms. I spread my clothes out to air and left a note for a *garçon* to come and repack them, but he never has done it—but tell me how in the name of Beelzebub did your investigations ever lead you to my apartment?"

POGGIOLI told of his encounter with Mademoiselle Becquard, the note he had glimpsed, which she had torn up.

The Chevalier broke into laughter:

"Splendid! Magnificent! But it is a pity she did not show you the note at once; you would have seen my name to it and saved yourself all this trouble."

"Isn't it odd," cried Poggioli, "that the little hump-backed robber should have whistled the very tune you requested on the very night you requested it."

"I daresay he heard Mam'selle Becquard sing it," returned the Chevalier lightly. "You see, m'sieu, the prefect and I happen to know who the actual criminal is. We have his finger prints and his whole criminal history."

"Who is he?" cried Poggioli.

"A certain M'sieu Hantoun; one of the most picturesque of men. He mulcted the Transatlantique Steamship Company out of three million francs during the World War."

"How was that?" queried the psychologist interested.

"He was a rum shipper. The French Government made a law forcing the steamship company to transport freight from Martinique to France at a certain low rate. The Transatlantique refused to carry cargo at the governmental figure, so Hantoun went to the steamship officials and arranged to pay them a higher figure than the statute provided, so he shipped his rum across while the spirits of the other distillers lay idle on the dock. When Hantoun had shipped all his rum, he went to Paris, filed suit against the steamship company and collected his excess freight."

"Why that's extraordinary!" exclaimed Poggioli.

"I don't know, any clever man might have thought of that."

"I don't mean that. The queer thing is that such a financier should stoop to bank robbery."

De Creviceau hesitated a moment.

"I understand he lost his money, but m'sieu, I do not quite see why you say 'stoop' to bank robbery?"

"Because it is lowering oneself," replied Poggioli tartly.

"I can't see that. A bank robbery does not imply a breach of faith, and M. Hantoun's transaction does. When this rum seller accepted a freight rate it was a tacit pledge of good faith between the two parties; but M. Hantoun made no such pledge to the Banc Nacionale. Those gentlemen were on their guard. The mere fact that they kept their money in ponderous vaults was a mute recognition of the ancient guild of safe breakers. It seems to me, m'sieu, that you should say M. Hantoun has risen from the treachery of crooked financial deals to the higher plane of self-respecting safe blowing. You should commend him for his moral reformation."

The American did not follow this absurd sophistry; he merely heard the Chevalier talking while his own mind was reviewing the different bits of evidence of the case.

"By the way," he ejaculated, "that bears out perfectly my theory that the man who committed the robbery had once been a wealthy man."

"I must congratulate you there," acknowledged the Chevalier, "that was a clever deduction, however I think you will have to forego your contention that the crime is mysterious."

"No crime is mysterious, Chevalier, once you understand it."

"Well, of course that's true; let us say complicated. This crime is not complicated, and it seems to me I have fairly won our wager."

Poggioli laughed.

"You have itching fingers, m'sieu, let us wait for the dénoument, the prefect's arrest."

"Certainly, certainly," agreed the Chevalier with a courteous gesture, and the two men hurried out of the hotel to the Chevalier's cab. They leaped inside and set out at once for the police headquarters. As they spun through the rainbow rues, they passed the statue of the Empress Josephine in the Savane. At the sight of this charming marble the Chevalier observed—

"Extraordinary women, these Martiniquais, had you observed, M. Poggioli?"

The psychologist nodded absently.

"And by the way, that singer, Mademoiselle Becquard, what was her address?"

"Fourteen Rue Chantilly."

"And she said she wished she could see the gallant who wrote her that note?" asked the Chevalier, smiling.

"Something to that effect."

The Chevalier shrugged and laughed aloud.

"I regret to seem romantic, m'sieu. I understand it is very bad form in America to exhibit the slightest interest in the opposite sex, openly; but in all my life, m'sieu, I never recall any woman, ma'mselle or madame, desiring my company, but what I made every effort to gratify her—do you happen to know the point on our route nearest number Fourteen Rue Chantilly?"

Poggioli looked up to see if his companion were in earnest. Apparently he was.

"You are not going to see Ma'mselle Becquard now!"

"After she braved the law in my defense; certainly!"

Poggioli was amazed.

"But this Hantoun," he cried, "let's see how it turns out!"

The Chevalier shrugged.

"The real kernel of the problem has been solved *mon ami*. The actual arrest of M. Hantoun is mere detail work which we may leave to M. Percin. There can be no intellectual interest attached to the arrest of a safe-cracker. I really think you owe me the hundred francs now, but I'm willing to wait. Come, what do you say, suppose we both call on Mademoiselle Becquard?"

"Impossible!" cried the American.

"We could twit her with this mystery. I can prove to her I wrote the note and then she would never know what to make of you."

"Why a moment ago," cried Poggioli vaguely outraged, "you were hot for both of us to rush off to the police station."

The Chevalier shrugged.

"That was before I considered the ma'mselle. Any man of taste, m'sieu, will fling away a ticket to melodrama to enjoy grand opera."

Poggioli was let down to have this much of his adventure fizzle out into a mere intrigue.

"I suppose here is as close to Rue Chantilly as we come," he said flatly and signalled the car to stop.

Poggioli opened the door of the cab in a disapproving silence and the Chevalier climbed out. The triangular man bowed the psychologist a graceful farewell.

"Here is luck in your arrest of M. Hantoun," he remarked gaily, "but I hope you will think that he lifted his plane of endeavor when he took to bank robbery."

And he moved off on the pavement flipping his cane in the gay fashion of a man setting forth to see a pretty, and somewhat equivocal woman.

WHEN Poggioli reached the police station a negro policeman ushered him at once to the office of M. Percin. The prefect arose with a brisk gesture.

"I'm glad you have come at last," he cried with relief in his tones, "did M. de Creviceau bring you."

"He started with me; he didn't come all the way."

"Why?"

"He said the thrill of the hunt was over; the rest would be routine."

M. Percin frowned thoughtfully.

"*Ça*, perhaps it will; but I would not have sent for you if I had been entirely satisfied with the correspondence between the two sets of prints—" he indicated the steel bar he had removed from the door of the bank vault and a card which came from his files—"if they had corresponded perfectly I should have proceeded with the routine as M. de Creviceau calls it."

"What's the difficulty?" inquired the criminologist going to the table.

"The two prints coincide perfectly in design, but not in detail of line," explained the prefect with a puzzled expression.

Poggioli had to look at the impressions through a magnifying glass to see precisely what M. Percin meant. After a brief study he saw that, while the whorls and curves on the card and bar were replicas, the lines on the bar were not clear and smooth, but were crinkled and broken in places.

"Do you consider it possible," queried the prefect that there are two persons on earth the only difference between whose fingerprints is, you might say, integrity of line?"

"You are an expert in fingerprints, m'sieu, I am not."

"I believe it is impossible, and yet I shouldn't want to make a false arrest of M. Hantoun. He is a wily fox; it would cost the government dearly. Have you heard what he did to the Transatlantique Company?"

"Yes, he seems to be the sort of man to handle with care."

"He is. But I am surprized that he is implicated in that robbery. Usually a man who specializes in what you might call legal robbery, seldom changes his *venue* to illegal robbery."

"The two branches of the industry do require a different psychology," agreed Poggioli.

As he was saying this one of those perfectly unaccountable explanations popped into his head. He remembered the glove button he had found on the bank floor.

"I've got it," he cried, "he was wearing a wet glove!"

"What do you mean?" ejaculated the prefect.

"That M. Hantoun soaked his hands in water to shrivel them and change his finger prints; then he wore damp gloves to the vault to keep his fingers withered. That's why he broke off a glove button. The glove was wet and difficult to unbutton."

"I see," cried the prefect illuminated, "he hoped to leave false prints by this method."

"Certainly, you see prints that did not correspond would be better than no prints at all; false prints would be a positive proof of his innocence."

"*C'est vrai!*" cried the prefect, "M'sieu Poggioli, I salute you, your great reputation does not belie you. Now I feel justified in starting at once to make the arrest. Will you come with me?"

"Where do we go?"

"Out to M. Hantoun's country place near Petite Lachaise. He has quite an establishment out there although I hear his funds were running short, prior to this last coup, of course."

The prefect pressed a buzzer and when an officer appeared said—

"Have the patrol wagon follow my motor in the direction of Petite Lachaise."

The officer saluted and retired. M. Percin slipped a revolver in his pocket, and after a moment's hesitation handed Poggioli one. A little later they hurried into the prefect's motor and glided away through the pied and dappled city. As they sped along, a whimsy occurred to Poggioli, that these crinkled fingerprints made the robbery sufficiently complicated to win his wager from de Creviceau.

The establishment of M. Hantoun in the northern faubourg of Fort de France was an Italian villa of white stone overlooking the indigo sweep of the bay. Palm trees in front of the villa spaced its broad white wings with French precision.

The notion that a bank robber, an ordinary safe-blower dwelt in such finished loveliness was almost incredible to Poggioli. Although he was a psychologist he never could get over that naïve American idea that beauty and morals are somehow connected; although the reverse of the theory is daily demonstrated in the lives of the artists who create beauty and the rich who possess it.

The two men stopped the motor at some distance down the boulevard and approached the entrance of the estate at a stroll.

"Are we going to walk straight from the gate to the house?" queried Poggioli.

"How else could we get there?" smiled the prefect.

"I—thought M. Hantoun might recognize

you and attempt to escape," murmured Poggioli, concealing his true uneasiness.

"No, he's not very likely to do *that*." The prefect's stress on "that" suggested more hazardous complications.

The situation was now thoroughly distasteful to Poggioli. He wished warmly that he had adhered to the purely intellectual side of this adventure. If M. Hantoun meant to resist; if there was to be shooting—such a *denouement* would be intolerably crude and childish after the severe logic which had worked up this situation.

The prefect opened the gate and the two gentlemen started across the lawn on a path of white sea gravel.

As Poggioli approached it in the intense sunshine the villa seemed preternaturally quiet. As Poggioli stared at it he had a feeling that somebody was peering at them from behind the green jalousies of the French windows. Some one easily could be hidden thus, nursing a loaded gun, watching them.

A strange feeling came to Poggioli that he was walking out of the aura of law and order into a sort of palpable anarchy. As he drew closer the deathlike villa, a curious titillation set up along the psychologist's backbone, in his fingers, on his scalp. As he drew still closer he momentarily expected the clap of a gun and the numbing impact of a bullet somewhere in his body. At every step toward the lifeless mansion this probability grew more and more imminent. Poggioli wet his dry lips and fingered the flat lump of the automatic in his pocket. He had never shot one and he scarcely knew which end of the thing to hold. He never before realized in his own person how utterly dependent are the majority of human beings upon the force of the law. He decided when he placed his foot on the first marble step he would be shot dead in his tracks—instantly killed.

He drew near these fatal steps; he swallowed drily; he placed a foot on the first step.

In the ring of an old fashioned lion's head door-pull on the villa door was tied a bow of crêpe. At this universal token of mortality the two men stopped stock still. It was one of the most shocking, one of the most unexpected things—a bow of crêpe.

"Somebody is dead," murmured the American in shaken tones.

"Suicide possibly," mumbled the prefect. He put out a hand and pulled the bronze ring. A bell sounded somewhere far in the interior of the dead villa. The men stood in silence. At last the prefect said—

"Shall we force a window?"

Poggioli demurred. He was on the edge of his nerves. The crêpe had a peculiarly distressing influence upon him.

At last M. Percin was making preparations to break into a window when a glissade of footsteps sounded in the hallway; a little later the door opened and a negro servant with a melancholy face stood before them.

"Where is your master, M. Hantoun?" asked the detective.

"M'sieu," said the negro, "my master is dead."

"M. Hantoun dead!"

"Oui, m'sieu."

"When did this happen?"

"Three days ago, m'sieu."

The two men stood before the great still house. Poggioli's brain groped among mountains of impossibilities.

"When was he interred?" interrogated the prefect sharply.

"Day before yesterday, m'sieu."

"Where?"

"In Petite Lachaise."

"Did you personally see him laid in his coffin and buried in Petite Lachaise?"

"Oh certainly, certainly, m'sieu," snuffled the old negro and he wiped the tears from his eyes with the back of his rusty wrist.

The two men pondered another moment. M. Hantoun really was dead; or at least this servant thought so.

"Do you object to us entering the villa, m'sieu?" inquired the prefect.

The caretaker made way mournfully. "You are the prefect of police, m'sieu; I suppose you have come to see about M. Hantoun's debts and invoice the furnishings—it is all very soon after my master's burial."

NOT without a certain sense of indecency, the two men entered the villa. Its darkened hallway still hung heavy with the smell of funeral flowers as the great wreaths had not yet been removed. In a reception room on the right hand tall wax tapers about half consumed, still burned with motionless yellow flames beneath a crucifix on a wall.

In the corner of the apartment stood a great black curtained *catafalque* where the dead man had lain in state.

The negro stood with bent head silently exhibiting this magnificence.

"Will you look through the other rooms, m'sieus?"

"No—where is the telephone?"

The servant slowly led the way to an alcove in the hall and withdrew a little way.

The prefect seated himself on the little telephone seat and put the receiver to his ear.

"The thing to do, evidently," he said, turning his head toward Poggioli, "is to probe into the burial of M. Hantoun?" He questioned in a low voice.

"That's all there is to do."

"A substitution of bodies, don't you suppose?"

"It could hardly be anything else."

But even as he agreed to this *outré* theory, a shivery prescience of still more uncanny complications swept over him. He stood and heard M. Percin order a police squad to report at Petite Lachaise with picks and shovels.

A little later the two investigators returned to their motor and drove around to the cemetery themselves.

The sexton, an old mulatto, immediately directed them to the grave of M. Hantoun. But as he pointed it out, Poggioli observed a slight but significant detail of the newly made grave. He pointed it out to M. Percin; one of the wilted wreaths lay to one side of the grave and was almost completely covered with dirt.

The prefect looked at it and nodded.

"I see, the grave has been opened since the funeral."

"That's correct. It was at night; the ghoul dropped this wreath and lost it in the excavated earth."

"Then what do you think really happened?" inquired the prefect.

Poggioli spread his hands hopelessly.

"The only thing that comes to my mind, is hypnotism, burial and resurrection as practiced by the fakirs of India."

"You mean Hantoun was an adept!" gasped M. Percin, "that he was buried *before* the robbery, was dug up, then committed it and escaped?"

"That's too fantastic to be credible, but that is all that occurs to me at this moment."

The prefect clutched at the side of his trim head in a sort of paroxysm of cogitation.

"That would account for the shrivelled fingers—"

"But not for M. Jevrat in Cat's Alley; nor M. Jevrat humming the 'Te Deums'—a hypnotized man could not possibly hear his own funeral dirge."

Here these futile speculations were interrupted by the police squad arriving with picks and shovels. M. Percin set them to work exhuming the body.

"I say the coffin will be empty," said M. Percin.

"I say it will contain a substituted body," said the psychologist, "M. Hantoun has never been interred."

The squad dug rapidly and presently exposed a metal coffin. They brushed the dirt carefully away from the top of the container and unscrewed the plate that fitted above the face. When it was laid back both men peered inside. There was a face under the glass. The prefect scrutinized the sunken features a moment, then shook his head.

"It is M. Hantoun himself. His grave clothes are awry as if he has struggled."

Poggioli got down into the grave beside the prefect. A sudden wild explanation seized on him springing from some obscure recess of his mind.

"M'sieu," he shivered, "open the glass, draw out his arm and look at his hand."

M. Percin wrought at the task like a navvy. The hand he finally drew into sight was raw and grewsome—it had been skinned.

POGGIOLI flung himself upward out of the grave.

"To the Hotel Coloniale! Quick!" he cried, "Seize de Creviceau!"

"How! Why!" cried the prefect, charging after the American.

"He has made a glove out of M. Hantoun's skin!"

"*Sacre bleu!* How simple!" gasped the prefect.

As they flung themselves in the motor and dashed back to town, the American clattered over the evidence:

"De Creviceau had simply waited in Cats' Alley for some man to be buried. It was pure accident that he had selected a man whose finger prints were in M. Percin's files. De Creviceau had pointed out the prints himself. The stench in his rooms; his note to the singer—"

Twenty minutes later they whirled up to the flaring checkered façade of Hotel Coloniale and the clerk came to Poggioli with a letter left for him by the Chevalier de Creviceau.

Before the fellow could deliver it, both prefect and psychologist cried out—

"Where is the Chevalier!"

"He left with his baggage for the docks two hours ago, m'sieus."

The men dashed to the docks. There they found a waterman who had rowed the Chevalier to the *Tiflis* which had weighed anchor some hour ago.

They rushed to the radio station and got into communication with the *Tiflis* and asked the arrest of the passenger de Creviceau.

As the operator flashed the message Poggioli turned suddenly to the prefect.

"Have you a Mercador's projection of this harbor, M. Percin?"

"Certainly, what do you want with it?"

"The Chevalier will not be on the *Tiflis*."

"But m'sieu, how, why?"

"Why he would expect us to radio, that's as simple as— He has probably arranged for a fish boat to pick him up somewhere."

"But that is fantastic—"

"It's natural. Get the projection, plot the course and speed of the *Tiflis*, then plot the positions of a jack boat sailing at right angles from the course of the steamer. You know the rate of the *Tiflis*, also the probable speed of a jack boat in this wind."

"But how do you know he will sail at right angles, m'sieu?" puzzled the prefect.

"That's the psychology of flight. It would apparently be placing the greatest distance between himself and the track of the steamer."

"I see," agreed the Martiniquain as he made a rapid gesture for the clerk to spread out the chart. "But we'll need two police launches, m'sieu, to search fish boats to the windward and the lee of the *Tiflis*."

"To the lee," snapped Poggioli, "he would sail the faster in that direction."

"That's fortunate," ejaculated M. Percin, "we have only one boat."

Thirty minutes later, during which time the crew at sea had opportunity to search their ship, the message came back that neither de Creviceau nor his bags were aboard. The captain tagged an official opinion that his passenger had leaped overboard and committed suicide.

Poggioli and M. Percin set out for the harbor. As they went, the American recalled the envelope which the clerk at the Coloniale had given him. He opened it. It contained a hundred franc note which later was identified as once belonging to the Banc Nacionale. Along with it was this note:

"You win.—DE CREVICEAU."

Poggioli smiled dryly and thought to himself—

"Correct."

Here the psychologist's rather odd adventure with the Chevalier de Creviceau entered its second and, to be frank, its more fantastic phase.

The CAMP-FIRE

A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

THIS from Leonard Nason explains the letter that follows it. In the circumstances the gob is to be excused for not signing his name, though the pies could hardly be recovered at this late date.

South Hingham, Massachusetts.

Am sending you an anonymous letter from an ex-gob. I wondered if any one would spot the affair around which "A Hearty Meal" was written. The *Martha Washington* is the ship that I called the *Annie* in that story. The ship that I was on was the *Powhatan*, which was to starboard of the *Martha Washington*. It is too bad the gob did not sign his name as I would have liked to write him.—STEAMER.

I just got done reading your story in *Adventure* and I must say this story runs true to life. In fact most of these things did happen on board the *U. S. S. Martha Washington* in the early part of 1918. If you can get in touch with any of the boys who were in the crew of the "Dirty Martha" they could back up these statements.

WE PULLED out of Hoboken in the early part of 1918 with part of the 2nd Cavalry and the other part were—casuals. We were bound for Bordeaux in convoy with five or six other transports. After we dropped the battle-wagon and picked up the destroyers and were almost in we had a submarine scare. It was just a little after 12 o'clock as pipe down just blew, and the crew were all sitting down eating dinner, and the troops were in the chow-line getting their grub! When the siren on one of the other ships blew we dropped chow, jumped over tables and soldiers threw away mess-kits and grub in a mad scramble to get on the upper decks. And in the bake-shop was a bunch of pies and hot bread just out of the ovens for the officers' mess.

After it was all over and they blew retreat, there was not a pie or a piece of bread left in the bake-shop. They made an awful stink about it, but they never found out who stole the pies. The officers had to go without pie for dinner that day. And when the cavalrymen went back to their bunks most of the side-arms were missing, also a lot of tailor-made smokes. They put the blame on the crew. We had a big inspection but none of the guns showed up. It just goes to show what funny things a guy thinks of in a time of danger like that.

Nothing came out of the submarine scare outside of a lot of shooting and dropping of ash-cans, making a lot of racket. We all came out O. K.

But about the guns and pies is the truth, as I helped eat the pies and also have one of the 45's in the house here as a remembrance of that trip—From an ex-gob on the *U. S. S. Martha Washington.*

* * *

NEGLEY FARSON of our writer's brigade is sailing across Europe in an auxiliary yawl with his wife as "crew." Possibly you've been reading about the trip in the Chicago *News*, Philadelphia *Bulletin* or some other metropolitan daily. Although he doesn't mention in the following letter that he descended the Danube without a pilot, said to be a feat not hitherto attempted. Nor does he speak of the lower Danube swamps, reputed a favorite lair for bandits.

The cowboy songs he mentions haven't yet reached me, but here's hoping. And here's a good luck to the *Flame* and her trip.

Flame, Belgrade, Yugo-Slavia.

We limped in here yesterday with a bent shaft from a dead-head above Novi Sad. I found your letter at the Consulate, and am answering while the Crew gets breakfast this morning. And you most certainly have got a letter coming to you. I started one on the Puszta, in Hungary, where I was out getting some cowboy dope. I got some of their songs and am sending them on to you. I think Camp-Fire will like them—I know they would go daft over the Puszta. No doubt many of Camp-Fire have been there.

AS YOU probably know, we switched plans a bit on the route of this trip—it is now "Sailing Across Europe." We started in Holland—I bought *Flame* in Southampton—and took the Lek, Lower Rhine, to the German frontier. Took the Rhine up to Mainz; then the Main to Aschaffenburg, where we were pulled 190 miles into the Bavarian Mountains by the Kette-Boot, a weird craft that pulls itself the entire 190 miles on a continuous chain. Swift current and very shallow. At Bamberg we locked into the Ludwig's canal—almost forgotten waterway—and in its 101 locks climbed over the Frankischer Jura Mountains in a series of steps. We came out into the Altmuhl at Deidfut in Bavaria. Got into the Danube at Kelheim, shot the three hundred miles to Vienna. Then Budapest—and here.

Got some good shooting on the way. Deer in Bavaria. And in Hungary was lucky enough to be asked to a partridge shoot by Admiral Horthy. He is splendid—a wonderful sportsman. Hungary is the promised land. I have never known a country or people that appealed to me so much. The csikos on the Puszta are a sort of cross between cowboys and Cossacks—with a dash of brigand thrown in. Their saddles have no girth or cinch-strap. Shot over an owl at Mezohegyes on the Roumanian frontier. His name was Pista.

THE Danube is adorable, almost deserted. That "Blue Danube" stuff has done it a great deal of harm. It's not blue—it's mud-colored; and frightfully lonely in most parts—just the place to cruise in. But it's no good for a craft with any draft whatsoever. Very shallow, full of uncharted sandbars. Nothing dangerous, of course; but dashed inconvenient when you fetch up with a bang in mid-stream.

Flame is a twenty-six foot, clinker-built yawl. 5 H.P. Moonbeam engine. Two feet six draft. Her cabin leaked like a sieve at first, but is now hunky-dory; and for the Balkans she is just the right thing. No hotels for us, thank you, in this flea-bitten world. I don't think I shall ever travel any other way in my life.

We push on from here in a few days, although I think I may go down to Montenegro. We will spend the fall in Roumania and Bulgaria. Ducks will probably be our chief diet from now on. There are lots of them here.

The Crew is talking now about hauling *Flame* over the Caucasas into the Caspian. I tremble, because the Crew's talks usually lead to results.

All my best wishes to you and to Camp-Fire.—
NEGLEY FARSON.

* * *

FOLLOWING Camp-Fire custom Don Cameron Shafer rises to introduce himself on the occasion of his first story in our magazine. Generally when one of our writers' brigade touches on his adventures in fiction writing I generally remove it from his letter as not being of interest to most of those who gather around our Fire. But maybe I'm wrong; things that seem usual enough to those of us who happen to be in the fiction business are not at all usual to those who are not. Heaven knows plenty of adventure may be had from a pen.

Schoharie, New York.

In taking a seat in the Camp-Fire Fellowship I find that, as usual, I have mighty little to say for myself.

The writing game is not new to me. Indeed, I was born in it! For my father is an editor and publisher, and so are nearly all the rest of my immediate family. So, years and years ago, I learned the printer's trade, but fingers that ached for the pen soon tired of "stick" and "rule" and "case."

The easiest way to learn writing is to find work as a reporter and, preferably, on a small city daily where the work is diversified and plenty of it! I had what may be called a natural gift for writing; it certainly came easy to me, with no trouble whatever to make good on any small staff and in any reportorial field. I got plenty of experience, plenty of writing—but darned little money!

Attracted by the pot of gold at the foot of the rainbow of promise in the advertising game I left newspaper work and became first an industrial press-agent, and then a professional adv. writer, for one of the largest industrials in the world—the General Electric Company.

But writing never ceased. For a while I amused myself by contributing some thousands of jokes, skits and light verse to the humorous magazines, the Sunday papers, etc. I wrote reams of it and sold much of it, and spent the money in riotous living, which I do not even regret now that the rioting years have flown and most of those once purchasable things flown with them! As evidence that this humorous writing did not cramp my style with the G. E. people, nor interfere with more honorable toil, I won my big chance as Adv. Mgr. of the (then—1919) newly organized International General Electric Company. After that I worked!

It had been just play before. I discovered the world a large place with our business scattered all over it. I studied, I labored, I sweat and I prayed for relief—anything!

In the meantime a novel had been published, serials had been sold here and there, a technical book or two, a juvenile, and the proceeds invested in an "anchor to leeward" in the shape of a small country place at Schoharie Court House, which is God's and my country! I early learned the precarious financial state of reporters in general and soon exploded the old myth of oodles of money in the adv. game. There, as elsewhere, the cash has to be earned. I foresaw the day when a haven of rest would be mighty comfortable in the offing. And when that day came I went back home in my faithful old Lizzie and sat me down to "make" *Adventure*. That was three years ago, and all this time I have been grinding out stories, trying harder and ever harder. Only a few weeks ago I wrote Mr. Hoffman that I was going to keep right on until he was the last darned editor in the world to refuse my stuff. And then, I was agreeably surprised to find that "*Hunter's Code*" had landed. But I don't know, and I never will know, what was the matter with all the rest. For, after they came back from *Adventure*, I sold them quickly enough to other editors—yea, even to the *Saturday Evening Post!*

Here in the pleasant valley of the Littlest River, beside the Almost Mountains and in the Big House, I hope to stay, writing;—writing of my own people, for the most part; or of those more distant scenes connected with past roamings or business experiences.—Don Cameron Shafer.

* * *

HERE is the case of an ambulance driver who did volunteer for the infantry. Camp-Fire is a good agency for digging up unusual cases.

Buhl, Minnesota.

In your issue for November 30th I note a letter from Paul S. Greene on the American Ambulance Service with the French army during the recent unpleasantness in Europe. Among other things he says, "I never heard of an ambulance driver volunteering for the infantry."

While it is not important, I thought it would interst your correspondent to know that there was at least one ambulance driver who was crazy enough to do just that thing. I was a member of Section No. 11, Norton-Harjes Group, known as the American Red Cross, from February to August, 1917. On the 28th of September, 1917, I enlisted in the American army as an infantryman. I signed up in Paris at the Headquarters Lines of Communication in the Rue Ste. Anne and was shoved into Company I, 18th U. S. Infantry, First Division, in the old Gondricourt Training Area. I lasted until late in April, 1918, when I got a "blighty" and saw the front no more. Whether there were any others who chose infantry I can not say. I, too, never heard of them. My brother, J. F. Van Ness, Jr., joined the artillery as a private at the same time I took the infantry in the same capacity. He served with the 6th Field with the First Division.—Byron W. Van Ness.

* * *

SOMETHING from Kenneth Malcolm Murray in connection with his story in this issue. Aviators and dog-fanciers will be particularly interested.

Philadelphia.

There are a couple of points that might be of interest to air pilots and dog fanciers as well as those regular guys that just term themsleves "readers." For instance, the description of *Orlick*, while ideal, is nevertheless perfectly possible and as accurate as I could make it.

I SAW one or two mediocre Borzois while in Poland, though they were mostly of the Courland type rather than the pure Psovoy. And, here's a point, the term "wolfhound" is a misnomer. These dogs are seldom run on wolves, or at least not on the big timber wolves, for the big gray fellows are more than a match for the Borzoi. Then, too, the Borzoi seldom kills his quarry unless it is something as small as a rabbit. He merely runs him down and holds him until the horsemen arrive. Some really fine sport has been obtained with the better type Borzois here in the States (Western) by running them on coyotes and such speed demons—a Borzoi having been known to course for a sheer twenty miles and bring down his game at the end! They are usually run in pairs, though one dog is always better than another and is termed the "lead dog"—some of them showing amazing sagacity in the manner of "side-tracking" or cutting corners and thus cutting down distance on the course.

They are lovable, wonderful tykes; I should like very much to hear if there are any really good specimens left in this country, and to have their owners, if such there be, tell us something about their experiences and their own dogs' personalities—for a good Borzoi has a decided personality, and his exploits are often exceedingly interesting.

AS TO the aerial exploits mentioned, I was told, when I first joined the Kosciuszko Squadron, in Poland, of the saving, by air, of Della, the Squadron's mascot. But I have been unable to verify it completely. Nevertheless, it is a perfectly good idea. The only part which might cause any argument, and that probably only among flyers, is the "trick" take-off near the end. But this *is* based upon an actual occurrence, and I can verify it by the records of the Squadron. During the big retreat from Kiev, Porucznik Pilote (1st. Lt. Pilot) George M. Crawford was shot down one sunny afternoon while flying low over a little peasant village along the western edge of the Ukrain. A burst of machine-gun bullets pierced his main gas-tank, letting down the pressure at once, thus stopping the flow of fuel to the motor. He reached down and switched over to the small gravity feed tank located in the upper wing, but it had not been used for a long time and the line was clogged with particles of some foreign matter. Only a thin trickle could work its way through, just enough to keep the engine from stopping entirely, but not anywhere near enough to make her run fast enough to keep his single-seater in the air. Down went Crawford and landed with a *wonk* on a tiny field.

He at once threw off his belt and climbed out, an automatic clutched tightly in each hand—for the Cossacks had seen him come down and were bent on collecting his head-money. (All of us had a neat little price on our heads in those days.) But suddenly "Buck" Crawford heard his motor sputter and start to pick up; the ship began to move away from him—with a mighty burst of speed he managed to regain the cockpit, climb in and grab the controls. The jar of landing had cleared the gas-line, and the motor was purring its full fifteen hundred revs with a vengeance!

But a ditch was in his way. He hit it, dove straight into a wheat-field on the other side, tore through it, jumped the ditch beyond that—and crashed one wheel when he dropped back from the "zoom"—bounced clear again, and took the air through a split-rail fence, carrying one of the rails back to the aerodrome with him! This is not word for word, but it is the sum and substance of his report as it is given in the Squadron records—and Buck, while an exceptionally fine spinner of yarns, is not given to fictionizing his work; instead, he rather tries to minimize the best things he has done —which is true of all good fellows, no, yes?—KENNETH MALCOLM MURRAY.

* * *

THIS letter arrived too late for the issue in which appeared his first story in our magazine, so Robert Carse follows Camp-Fire custom and rises to introduce himself along with his second.

New Rochelle, New York.

This youngster has a little misgiving about stepping into the light of the Camp-Fire where so many seasoned old-timers already hold forth, but here goes.

Succumbed to the wanderlust out West after the war, during which I served as a buck private in the R. O. T. C. Went out on the Great Lakes in the ore boats in the spring of 1920. Some of my salty shipmates prevailed upon me to take a crack at the deep-water ships, so I signed aboard the *Steel Engineer* that fall and was on the Channel Ports and Mediterranean run for over a year. Later switched to the Panama-West Coast-Philippines run. Was quite badly jammed up in a gale off northern California in the spring of 1922 and went in sick-bay in Marine Hospital Number 5 at Port Townsend, Wash., and had the doctors rearrange me a bit.

Got my sick-bay discharge and caught ship for home, making New York early in the fall of 1922. My injury and my desire to write combined against my love of the sea and decided me to stay ashore. Three years in the newspaper business, on the *Times* in New York, over in Jersey and for a while down in the land of eternal sunshine and salesmen in Florida. Now battering out short stories *ad infinitum.*—ROBERT CARSE.

* * *

NO PRECEDENT is being set in publishing the following reward notice. I feel warranted in passing it on to Camp-Fire because without our mediation it would be difficult to reach those in position to give information and because the facts in the case, on the face of them, seem to indicate not only an atrocious murder but also politics, all the way from local to international, that is far more interested in other matters than in seeing justice done in this case.

Youngstown, Ohio.

Would it be possible for you to publish the following REWARD notice in the "Camp-Fire" columns, or any variation of it? Yours is the only publication, that I know of, certain to reach the localities in which I am seeking information, and those who may be able to aid in securing it.

$500.00 (*Gold*) *REWARD*

will be paid to the person or persons giving information that leads to the conviction and execution of the two men guilty of the murder of Cecil D. Hodson (a British subject) superintendent of Cata Arroyo Mine, Concepcion del Oro, Zacatecas, Mexico, on October 20, 1924. Please address any information or advice to LEO C. HODSON, 118 Halleck St., Youngstown, Ohio, U. S. A.—LEO C. HODSON.

* * *

DON'T forget that we are adventuring in poetry. Questing after poetry that *is* poetry. Not judged by academic and technical standards but by its actual human appeal. We're staging a little revolution against the general poetry of today. Seems to us as if most of it had got pretty well away from the fundamental essence of poetry—appeal to the emotions. Too much emphasis on form, too little feeling to convey, too little content. Or else plain trash and jingle. Or maybe an attempt to be "strong stuff" by using rough language and rough material—and not making very good poetry out of them. Or decadent rot that stinks in the nostrils of a decent man yet isn't really strong enough to produce a healthy stink. Or devoting itself to things too trifling to merit serious attention.

You know. Most magazine or other modern poetry doesn't warm you much deeper than the skin at most, if you read it at all. And how much of it do you remember or have any desire to remember?

There's something wrong. Poetry at its best has tremendous power over man's emotions and has had as far back in history as man has been sufficiently developed to write it. Without attempting any academic analysis, its appeal is elemental—tremendous if it is real poetry.

And we're going adventuring to find real poetry for our magazine's pages. We don't expect to find the mother lode. A nugget now and then will satisfy us. There aren't many nuggets. And we in the office can't always tell real nuggets from fool's gold. Two or three of the staff are entirely competent to pass upon the technique of poetry, to assay it by academic standards; the rest of us have only flimsy knowledge of these matters. We want to get poetry sound in technique if we can, but the main purpose is to get poetry with real appeal to human emotions. And I don't mean the kind of emotions stirred by contemplating the shadow of a frail pink flower across a fern frond at dusk of a July day in a New Medford, Conn., garden. Said shadow has its charms and I'm susceptible to them, but when some one devotes a whole poem to it I fall to wishing he or she would go take some exercise and than eat a piece of beefsteak.

What we want is the kind of poem that "gets to a man," the kind he's going to memorize and repeat to himself and others. There aren't many of them that do this to the average man, but there are such from time to time and we're going a-hunting for them.

All men aren't moved by the same things. The only thing we in the office can do is to pick out those poems that move the majority of us and then pass them on to you for final judgment. And we sha'n't get anywhere unless you tell us what that final judgment is. We're not aiming just to please ourselves in the office but to learn how to choose the kind of poem that pleases the majority of all who gather at Camp-Fire.

There won't be many printed. Probably about one every three issues. Watch for them, read them, pass in your vote. If you don't like a poem don't fail to tell us so. Tell us which ones you do like, if any. And it will help still more if you tell us why. But don't bother to comment on technique in detail; technique is a secondary consideration and we shall not hesitate to print poems whose technique we know is faulty if, in spite of that, they "deliver the punch."

Also we need your votes to help in selecting the best poem published by our magazine during the year so that we can award *Adventure's* prize of a hundred dollars to the writer thereof.

I might mention that most of those already bought were selected only after a good deal of disagreement, that one of them makes me rather ill when I think about it. and that we're having a rather strenuous time all around, though enjoying it immensely and very much interested. We certainly need your judgment and votes. Our job in the office is merely to find out what kind of poetry really registers on the majority at Camp-Fire and then to get that kind so far as we can. Yes, we know poetry can't be chosen by definite prescription, but a general direction can be indicated. And you who read this are one of those to do the indicating.

* * *

WHILE I'm not quite sure of his hand-writing in places the following from an Australian comrade looks like a practical explanation of the Indian rope trick:

> Sydney, N. S. W., Australia.
>
> Just a line from an Australian admirer.
>
> I noticed in your Camp-Fire of May 10th a sling off (Australian slang) at the Indian rope trick. As one who has looked into the matter, let me tell your correspondent how to do it himself with a few years' practise. Make a piece of wood that is jointed only one way with a stop on one side, a round section about two inches long, about one inch in diameter. Naturally put all the stop joints to the same side for a length of 25 feet. Then with infinite patience flatten a cotton sheath that will cover the completed jointing. Practise for about six months throwing the coil in the air so that it will follow the casting of a natural rope. Then train a 2½ stone boy to climb this result so that the pressure is on the stop joint for the whole distance and it would be just as well for the little fellow's safety to use well seasoned teak with hard oaken dowels as joint pieces, as the strain is considerable.
>
> Perhaps after the first year or two he would get some idea of the preliminary stages of the trick, the final acts of which I must confess myself as to being as much in the dark as he is. Then perhaps he will begin to realize why in all fairness to the cleverness

of the trick. I pen these few lines for his and other disbelievers' benefit.—W. J. STELZER.

* * *

MAYBE you won't have to look up those two words in a dictionary, but I had to—despite four years of Greek in my erudite youth. For the benefit of others as ignorant as I, here is what the dictionary says:

Lycanthropy—The fabulous power of transformation into a wolf; the belief, characteristic of certain primitive creeds, that some persons become transformed periodically or permanently into wolves.

Melanism—Abnormal development of dark coloring-matter in the skin, feathers, etc.; opposed to *albinism. a. melanistic.*

Going on from there, we can now all read with more intelligence Raymond S. Spears' letter concerning his story in this issue. Personally I do not read his letter with any impulse to scoff. Once T. S. Stribling and I agreed over a luncheon table on what he expressed much better than I, to this general effect: "All human knowledge yet attained is, compared to the total of truth, merely a very, very thin film spread over the surface of a great, deep pond." Sometimes I think the film is even thinner than that, and the pond much bigger and deeper. We look back with pity or contempt upon the ignorance of past ages, forgetful of the fact that countless generations will look back with ever increasing contempt upon our own ignorance.

So do I believe in were-wolves? No, but my knowledge is only an infinitesimal fraction of the film on the pond. Nor do I know enough to rise and say that the theories touched upon by Mr. Spears have no solid foundation. Neither, I think, does any one else. These things, whatever their nature, are in the pond.

Please note that Mr. Spears makes no other claim than that. He states some accepted facts and some theories that, however generally unaccepted, exist. He has chosen to weave these theories into a fiction tale, saying merely that the question of their truth lies in the pond. We label it "Off the Trail," and print it because it seems to us a very good story.

Inglewood, California.

Lycanthropy is, naturally, subject to a heap big question-mark. One either believes, or it's stuff and nonsense. I choose to express no opinion. The story, itself, probably originated first in my talk with a British Indian, perhaps a Hindu, to whom I gave a ride in my car in the Imperial Valley. His curious figure, his strange, high voice, the odd expression in his eyes have recurred to my memory often since then—1920, January.

WERE-WOLF stories have been traditional into remotest human ages, and I've read them—a favorite book having been "Arabian Nights" in which wicked witch queens converted tiresome lovers into horses or camels. No doubt I've had fanciful notions on the subject since I first read the Christmas gift of forty years ago.

The immediate cause was first Merriam's check list of forty-six large American bears, species developed through isolation in desert-surrounded mountain groups—evolutionary variations. And I have known cats with six or seven claws on a foot—grown from inbreeding. And these "sports" not infrequently appear in nature, black foxes being inbred reds, albino and melanistic freaks being thus probably explained. And particularly savage tigers, leopards, and other cats are readily traced in theory, if not in fact, to the individualistic spiritual or mental qualities. And, though I could specify in only a few instances, the fact is my inbred cougar theory, with its too many claws and distortions, in the Silent Mountains, would probably stand analysis and comparison with actualities into every detail, physically and mentally.

ONLY when I give a boy a cougar foster-parent do I begin to trespass on credulity. Yet the fact is, children have been carried away and nurtured by wild beasts, a child by a badger as described by Seton for an American example. And the founding of Rome unquestionably is a tradition based on fact. And Kipling's "Jungle Book" picturesquely unites lore of British India, South African tales, folk-lore, include the strange adventures of children adopted by wild beasts. "Tarzan of the Apes," Burroughs' series, is not entirely based on imagination, as regards the original theory or theme.

The idea of a human turned into a beast, willingly or involuntarily, is one phase; I choose for my story the idea of a human having another self, a cat in the jungle. This, too, is literal anthropology—"Leopard-men of The Naga Hills," Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, *Journal*, January to June, 1920; reprinted in Annual Report of Smithsonian Institute, 1921. This long article is authority for the belief that when the cat is wounded, the man shows the scar—and is sick while the animal is suffering. The scar appears sometime later, the anguish occurring with no visible evidence of wounds.

The self-explanation mortised into the story required only a page or two addition. I left the girl in knickerbockers, as this definitely gives her the English woman's bearing, giving her quarter-blood that's Asiatic. And I left the offerings by Yama of his possessions in the cave for the readers to figure out for themselves. But as a matter of fact any one who has dipped into the literature of the aborigines and savage races will instantly recognize this bit of link between Yama and the uncivilized habit of mind. And particularly, it will indicate the cat-man's intuitive respect to what may be his old friend and companion, or even his other self.

My chief concern was to make plausible to the ordinary mental attitude of a civilized reader the savage habit of thought, with the mystic powers which are unquestionably possessed in some degree by true believers. The studies now being made, scientifically, into the strange engine we call our brains are revealing more and more distinctly a basis for Black Arts and Magician practises. Christian Science rediscovers the faith of the Medicine Man, which did heal, and unites more mental power with the faiths which must bring us somewhere within the scope of religious reverence given to whatever is the origin of life, whether we speak in terms of religion or science—or unite both in epochal comprehension of the most marvelous of all Truths, that we do live and think (if we do!).

Just a story, "The Were-Cougar" nevertheless does bring together a whole lot of exact data, and invites attention to our easy way of speaking of this man as a snake, that a hog, some women as a cat and perhaps giving another the attribute of a "witch." And it ventures along the border line of the unknown mind of man and beast, with something more than idle speculation.—Raymond S. Spears.

P. S.—About 1857, tradition says, three Brahma bulls came ashore from a wreck on the Texas Gulf coast. These live sailor-beef animals were inbred with native long-horn stock, and became the ugliest, most dangerous salt-grass animals. A few years ago many India swamp-cattle were introduced to breed up beef stock in Texas salt-grass country. Cowboys find them "bad," much faster than native animals, dangerous, ugly. They were brought in to overcome the unhealthy marsh conditions.—R. S. S.

* * *

LEST any one comes at us with charges of historical inaccuracies in the cover design of this issue we hasten to say that it makes no pretense to historical accuracy but is purely decorative. Usually when a ship appears on our cover we strive to have it nautically correct and a true representative of its historical period, but occasionally we feel warranted in availing ourselves of the same license habitually used by almost all other magazines.

* * *

THREE more of those who have assisted in making our magazine will gather with us no more at Camp-Fire.

August 4th Lewis Appleton Barker, who had so long presided over the Edged Weapons Section of "Ask Adventure," died suddenly at his home in Brookline, Massachusetts.

August 17th Alanson Skinner of our writers' brigade was killed in an automobile accident in North Dakota while on an expedition for the Museum of the American Indian.

September 5th J. Frank Middleton, who had conducted the Colorado and Wyoming Section of "Ask Adventure," was killed in his automobile by a railroad train near Boulder, Colorado. The accident occurred only an hour after he had left Frank Earnest, Keeper of Camp-Fire Station 267 at Sugar Loaf, with whom Mr. Middleton, his wife and baby grandson had been spending a week devoted to fishing.

Three within a month, two killed, the other dying suddenly. Upon the Memorial Tablet erected by contributions from readers and staff to those have helped in the making of our magazine and are no longer with us the carved names grow in number. Fourteen now.

To these three who are the last to leave us we make our salutations and our farewells, and our thanks go to them for their yeoman work in the making of our magazine. Camp-Fire, following its old custom, rises, heads uncovered, to wish them Godspeed over the Long Trail.

* * *

OUR Camp-Fire Stations are spreading steadily over the map. Help make them grow. Any qualified person can start a Station.

A STATION may be in any shop, home or other reputable place. The only requirements are that a Station shall display the regular Station sign, provide a box or drawer for mail to be called for and preserve the register book.

No responsibility for mail is assumed by anybody; the Station merely uses ordinary care. Entries in register to be confined to name or serial number, route, destination, permanent address and such other brief notes or remarks as desired; each Station can impose its own limit on space to be used. Registers become permanent property of Station; signs remain property of this magazine, so that if there is due cause of complaint from members a Station can be discontinued by withdrawing sign.

A Station bulletin-board is strongly to be recommended as almost necessary. On it travelers can leave tips as to conditions of trails, etc., resident members can post their names and addresses, such hospitality as they care to offer, calls for any travelers who are familiar with countries these residents once knew, calls for particular men if they happen that way, etc., notices or tips about local facilities and conditions. Letters to resident members can be posted on this bulletin board.

Any one who wishes is a member of Camp-Fire and therefore entitled to the above Station privileges subject to the Keeper's discretion. Those offering hospitality of any kind do so on their own responsibility and at their own risk and can therefore make any discriminations they see fit. Traveling members will naturally be expected to remember that they are merely guests and act accordingly.

Keepers answer letters only if they wish. For local information write "Ask Adventure."

A Station may offer only the required register and mail facilities or enlarge its scope to any degree it pleases. Its possibilities as headquarters for a local club of resident Camp-Fire members are excellent.

The only connection between a Station and this magazine is that stated above, and a Keeper is in no other way responsible to this magazine nor representative of it.

Arizona—200—Clifton. C. Hooker.
209—Quartzite. Buck Conner, Box 4.
285—Yuma. W. P. Kline, 4th Ave. & 8th St.
Arkansas—161—Hot Springs. Tom Manning, Jr., 322 Morrison Ave.

California—28—Lost Hills. Mr. and Mrs. M. A. Monson, Cottage Inn.
60—San Bernardino. Charles A. Rouse, Hotel St. Augustine.
73—Galt. E. M. Cook, Box 256.
74—Eagle Rock. John R. Finney, 109 Eddy Ave.
89—Chico. K. W. Mason, 1428 Park Ave.
108—Helendale. G. R. Wells, P. O. Box 17.
113—Vallejo. Edith G. Engesser, Golden Triangle Rabbitry, Highway Homes.
114—Mill Valley. L. F. Guedet, Restawhyle Knoll.
115—Los Gatos. G. H. Johnson.
116—Sebastopol. Mrs. Lucy E. Hicks, 420 S. Main St.
126—Covelo. Whit H. Ham, Box 388.
141—Santa Cruz. A. W. Wyatt, Capitola Road and Jose Ave.
149—San Francisco. A. H. Hutchinson, Veteran Press, 1264 Valencia St.
186—Santa Ysabel. William Strover, Santa Ysabel Inn.
210—Berkeley. Dr. Louis C. Mullikin, 305 Acheson Bldg.
211—Pomona. Fred G. Sunley, 480 E. Alverado St.
212—Del Monte. Alex H. Sokoloff, 3rd Signal Co. R. O. T. C.
231—San Francisco. Earl V. Swift, 24-A Brady St.
251—Williams. Joe Lanouette, Opera Pool Hall.
252—Fresno. Mrs. Harriet Church, Echo Gardens, 712 Echo Ave.
257—San Francisco. K. F. Richards, 1807 Post St.
266—Santa Barbara. E. Chester Roberts, 714 State St.
273—Los Angeles. Henry M. Harrod, 6615 So. Main St.
286—Sacramento. Carl W. La Force, 2329 Eye St.
287—Stockton. Ivan J. Dill, 520 E. Washington St.
298—La Mesa. Alan Wanbough, 343 Spring Street.
310—Cajon Pass. Richard Hall; Hall's Auto Camp.
312—San Diego. Frank H. Huston, 2966 California St.
321—Banning. William Daustin, P. O. Box 36.
Colorado—105—Grand Junction, Bart Lynch, 236 Main St.
267—Sugar Loaf. Frank Earnest.
279—Denver. De Forrest E. Hall 2838 Arapahoe St.
Connecticut—142—Meriden. Homer H. Brown, 1 Colony Place.
Delaware—232—Delmar. J. A. Aniba, Stone House Hotel.
D. C.—167—Washington. Walter A. Sheil, 503 Sixth St. N.E.
Florida—87—Miami. A. C. Smith, 49 N. E. First St.
117—Miami. Miami Canoe Club, 115 S. W. South River Drive.
128—Titusville. Max von Koppelow, Box 1014.
138—St. Petersburg. Miss Maude V. Hughson, 2402 First Ave. So.
139—St. Petersburg. Capt. Lee Whetstone, Hotel Poinsettia.
143—St. Petersburg. J. G. Barnhill, 10 Third St. N.
158—Crescent City. E. N. Clark, care *Call*.
188—Johnson. Clifford Martin.
258—Jacksonville. T. J. Eppes, The Hobby Shop.
262—Wildwood. E. M. Dilly, L. B. 114.
285—Tampa. R. Stuart Murray, Mezzanine Floor, Hillsboro Hotel.
288—Orlando. O. D. Young, 112 Court St.
318—Chipley. Jack H. Shivers, P. O. Box 53, Along the Old Spanish Trail.
322—New Pomona. Ed. N. Clark. Putnam District Progress.
Georgia—98—Hinesville. R. N. Martin, *The Liberty County Herald*.
289—Monticello. O. E. Wells.
Idaho—110—Pocatello. C. W. Craig, 223 S. Second Ave.
Illinois—66—Chester. Capt. W. B. Barter.
66—Mt. Carmel. W. C. Carter, 1122 Chestnut St.
67—Plainfield. J. P. Glass, The Linshield Co.
189—Chicago. Herman A. Schell. 8708 Vincennes Ave.
213—Chicago. Pietro Ferraro, 1007 S. Peoria St.
237—Chicago. Wm. Churchill, 6541 S. State St.
253—Chicago. G. C. Huebner, 2608 Magnolia Ave.
290—Gibson City. J. D. Ashley, 117 Sangamon Ave.
303—Chicago. Leslie C. Marshall, 9155 Normal Blvd.
312—Paxton. Oscar Olson.
Indiana—18—Connersville. Norba Wm. Guerin, 112 East Eighteenth St.
90—Linton. Herschell Isom, 73 Tenth St., N. E.
180—Warsaw. Homer Lewis.
287—Vincennes. John C. Maloney, 1004 N. Seventh St.
Iowa—238—Atlantic. George Woodbury, 5 E. Third St.
Kansas—228—Leavenworth. Ben H. Lukenbill, 315 Shawnee St.
Kentucky—144—Corbin. Keith Mauney.
190—Louisville. H. S. Summers, 421 W. Jefferson St.
Louisiana—140—New Orleans. J. D. Montgomery, Navy Recruiting Office.
228—St. Rose. C. M. Elfer.
Maine—19—Bangor. Dr. G. E. Hathorne, 70 Main St.
59—Augusta. Robie M. Liscomb, 73½ Bridge St.
111—Lewiston. Howard N. Lary, 714 Main Street.
243—Winthrop. O. A. Abbot.
320—East Sullivan. H. B. Stanwood.
Maryland—55—Baltimore. Henry W. L. Fricke, 1200 E. Madison St., at Asquith.
82—Baltimore. Joseph Patti, Jr., 4014 E. Lombard St.
151—Williamsport. L. J. Schaefer, Frederick St.
Massachusetts—56—Watertown Arsenal. E. Worth Benson, Station Hospital.
274—Everett. Aubrey S. McLellan, 4 Marion Place.
Michigan—69—Grand Rapids. Dr. A. B. Muir, 1121 Turner Ave., N. W.
79—Lansing. Geo. H. Allen, *Lansing Industrial News*, 109½ N. Washington Ave.
106—Gaylord. Sidney M. Cook.
131—Muskegon. James Fort Forsyth, Forsythia, R. F. D. No. 3.
137—Flint. O'Leary & Livingston, 309 So. Saginaw St.
192—Pickford. Dr. J. A. Cameron, The Grand Theater.
227—Adrian. S. N. Cook, 221 Clinton St.
Minnesota—112—St. Paul. St. Paul *Daily News*, 92 E. Fourth St.
145—St. Cloud. F. T. Tracy, 502 6th Ave. South.
299—Minneapolis. Russell Hearne, 411 First Ave. N.
311—Canby. Joe Millard, Minnesota State Fair.
Mississippi—88—Tunica. C. S. Swann, Tunica Plumbing & Electric Shop.
99—Picayune. D. E. Jonson.
268—Pascagoula. C. E. Walter, 239 Orange St.
Missouri—51—St. Louis. W. R. Hoyt, 7921 Van Buren St., phone Riverside 250.
94—St. Louis. C. Carter Lee, M. D., 3819 Olive St.
127—Salem. Emmea C. Higgins, 100 N. Tenth St.
289—Nevada. T. St. Hope, 705 N. Clay St.
Montana—240—Fort Missoula. Company C, 4th Infantry.
254—Hamilton. Mrs. Lucy Hyde, 64 N. Second St.
288—Anaconda. R. T. Newman.
Nebraska—95—Omaha. L. W. Stewart, 119 No. 16th St.
214—Tecumseh. Dr. C. F. Roh.
New Hampshire—316—Concord. R. E. Colby, 81 N. Main St.
319—Clairmont. Frank H. Moose, Box 25.
New Mexico—96—Silver City. Edward S. Jackson, Box 435.
203—Elephant Butte via Engle. Henry Stein.
229—Santa Fé. N. Howard Thorp, 103 Palace Ave.
290—Santa Fé. Ralph E. Pierson.
New Jersey—91—Tenafly. Ed Stiles, P. O. Box 254.
146—Paterson. Charles S. Gall, 378 Dakota St.
164—Chatham. Roy S. Tinney.
244—East Orange. Alfred C. Swenson, 77 Lawton St.
245—Corbin City. Lee Roberts.
260—Camden. Benj. P. Thomas, 2791 Constitution Rd.
269—South Orange. Eugene Connett, 170 Turrel Ave.
275—Camden. Captain Herbert George Sparrow, Ship No. 1269 Naval Post, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Armory of Second Battalion, Naval Militia of New Jersey, Temple Theater Building, 415 Market St.
314—Jersey City. C. Dieze, Follansbee's Rest, Inc.
New York—23—Jamestown. W. E. Jones, 906 Jefferson St.
34—New York City. St. Mary's Men's Club, 142 Alexander Ave., Bronx, N. Y. C.
147—Youngsville. Harry Malowitz, Youngsville House.
165—Saratoga. Wm. Marshall, Office No. 9, Chamber of Commerce Arcade.
177—Brooklyn. George Iverson, 306 Macon St.
185—Brooklyn. J. M. Canavan, 69 Bond St.
193—Niagara Falls. Roy Tompkins, 1155 Garret Ave.
194—Hadley. Mrs. Chas. H. Black.
205—Newburgh. Jacques Teller, 5 Golden St.
215—Yonkers. George's Sport Shop, 45 Main St.
226—Red Hook. P. W. E. Hart, The Silver Birch Shop; Albany Post Road, Dutchess Co.
230—New York City. Fred G. Taylor, 424 Broadway, Dobbs Ferry.
233—Albany. R. N. Bradley, 84 Livingston Ave.
239—Valley Stream, Long Island. Arthur Borchmann, Centarlane.
298—Walton. S. K. Sherman.
311—Brooklyn. Harry A. Odell, 4 Lafayette Ave.
314—Binghamton. Harold E. Snedeker, 41 Riverside St.
North Carolina—92—Biltmore. C. Marshall Gravatt, Felstone Co.
133—Pine Bluff. N. Steve Hutchings.
159—Waynesville. Harry M. Hall, 720 Walnut St.
255—Tryon. Howard Shannon.
315—Charlotte. Coverse Harwell, P. O. Box 1368.
North Dakota—206—Fairmount. Frank Kitchener, Richland Hotel.
Ohio—52—Uhrichsville. Anthony Sciarra, 329 W. Fourth St.
58—Cleveland. J. F. Thompson, Community Pharmacy, 9505 Denison Ave.
63—Uhrichsville. Chas. F. Burroway, 312 Water St.

75—Columbus. Chas. W. Jenkins, 54 S. Burgess Ave.
113—Buena Vista. Geo. T. Watters.
166—Toledo. Frank P. Carey, 3267 Maplewood Ave., or wherever his Ford happens to be.
207—Columbus. Tod S. Raper, 77 Taylor Ave.
241—Cincinnati. D. W. Davidson, 1414 Vine St.
242—Bellefontaine. Harry E. Edselle, 328 Plumvalley St.
263—Toledo. F. P. Carey, Box 143, Station A.
264—Toledo. S. G. La Plante, 1820 Dunham St.
291—Ravenna. McGraw and Eckler.
292—Oberlin. E. A. Sherrill, Sherrill Acres, Chicago-Buffalo Highway, State Route No. 2.
Oklahoma—57—Haskell. Roy Holt.
313—Oregon. F. L. Buker, Waldpart.
225—Shawnee. A. M. Postlethwaite, 521 N. Beard St.
234—Blackwell. H. W. Willis, 204½ N. Main St.
Oregon—4—Salem. D. Wiggins.
286—Portland. W. C. Chapman, 24 Union Ave.
Pennsylvania—20—Philadelphia. Wm. A. Fulmer, 267 S. Ninth St.
21—Braddock. Clarence Jenkins, Union News Co.
24—Philadelphia. Alfred A. Krombach, 4159 N. Eighth Street, and Spring Mills Station, P. & R. Ry. Co., Montgomery County.
78—Pittsburgh. Peter C. Szarmach, 3030 Brereton St.
100—Philadelphia. Veterans of Foreign Wars, 929 N. 41st St.
182—Greensburg. Don Frederick Wermuth.
224—Oil City. J. M. Blair, 608 W. Front St.
247—Pittsburgh. J. F. Lichtenhaer, 224 Swope St.
248—Philadelphia. Carl D. Charles, 214 East St.; Wissahickon.
261—Shippensberg. *The Chronicle*, 12 South Earl St.
312—Athens. Thomas L. Stalford, The Hiker (Spanish War Hdqts.), 112 N. Main St.
South Dakota—179—Fairburn. Jesse K. Fell, *Custer County Press*.
270—Centerville. C. H. Hornbeck, *The Centerville Journal*.
South Carolina—97—Charleston. J. W. Mette, Navy Yard.
217—Charleston. J. H. Keener, 346 King St.
293—Florence. S. B. Stacey.
Tennessee—195—Knoxville. C. G. Pruden, 2024 Rose Ave.
Texas—33—Houston. J. M. Shamblin, 4805 Oakland St.
123—San Juan. D. L. Carter, Box 436.
134—Breckenridge. Joe Randel, 226 Baylor Avenue.
148—Port Arthur. Ralph C. Cornwell, 215 Eighth St.
174—San Angelo. E. M. Weeks, 24 West Eighth St.
183—South San Antonio. J. F. Nicodemus, Box 111, So. San Antonio Transfer.
218—Fort Worth. Robert Lentz, R No. 6 Box 73.
271—Harlingon. H. C. Jennings, Box 324.
280—Reese. L. H. Baker.
294—Coleman. Clyde Ransberger.
300—Pecos. Oram Green, Third and Cedar Sts.
310—El Paso. H. B. Stout, 1114 North Copia St.
316—Novice. J. Bab Lewis, Cashier, Novice State Bank.
Utah—157—Salt Lake City. Ned Howard, 127 N. St.
Virginia—108—Cape Charles. Lynn Stevenson, P. O. Box 26
219—Richmond. Wm. Meek, 104 S. 1st St.
Washington—1—Ione. Evan Morgan, Albert's Billiard Hall.
61—Burlington. Judge B. N. Albertson, Fairhaven Ave.
83—Seattle. Chas. D. Raymer, Raymer's Old Book-Store, 1330 First Ave.
154—Mt. Vernon. Miss Beatrice Bell, Western Washington Auto Club.
155—Olympia. B. F. Hume, Commercial Club Rooms.
172—Sunnyside. Mark Austin.
196—Arlington. F. T. Herzinger.
220—Sultan. George W. Snyder, Main St., opp. P. O.
281—Warm Beach. Paul E. Vollum and Kirkham Evans, Evans Bldg.
West Virginia—48—Huntington. John Geiske, 1682 Sixth St.
299—Fairmount. Dr. J. W. Ballard, 314 Main St.
317—Clarksburg. W. G. Hamrick, 117 Short St.
Wisconsin—41—Madison. Frank Weston, 401 Gay Bldg.
Alaska—295—Ketchikan. Thwaites Photo Shop, Ingersoll Hotel Bldg., Front St.
Australia—39—Melbourne. William H. Turner, "Wolwoling" Keen St. Northcote; and Carters' and Drivers' Union, 46 William St.
282—Ryricton, Victoria. Thomas T. Winter, care of Post Office.
76—Victoria. Chas. M. Healy, 30, The Avenue, Windsor Post, Dist. No. 8.
130—Brisbane. H. V. Shead, Sutton St., Kangaroo Pt.
235—Sydney. Phillip Norman, 842 Military Road, Nosman, Newtown.
278—Belgrave, Victoria. Raymond Paule, Carn Bre Old Monbulk Road.
Belgium—131—Antwerp. Reuben S. James, Place de l'Entrepot 3.
British Columbia—231—Stewart. Jack O'Shea, Ryan Bldg.
236—Vancouver. A. Johnson, 552-3 Hastings St.
Canada—31—Howe Sound, B. C. C. Plowden, Plowden Bay.
84—White Rock, B. C. Charles L. Thompson.
22—Burlington, Ontario. T. M. Waumsly, Jocelyn Bookstore.
4—Dunedin, P. E. Island. J. N. Berrigan.
29—Deseronto, Ontario. Harry M. Moore, *The Post Weekly*.
45—Norwood, Manitoba. Albert Whyte, 84 La Riviere St.
30—Winnipeg, Man. Walter Peterson, The Carleton Hotel, 216 Notre Dame Avenue.
62—Woodstock, Ontario. George L. Catton, 94 Metcalfe St.
85—Oshawa, Ontario. J. Worral, 6½ King St. E.
102—Amherst, Nova Scotia. Lloyd E. MacPherson, 5 Belmont St.
124—Hartshorn, Alberta. Leonard Brown, 33-34-17 W4M.
178—Moncton, N. B. Chas. H. McCall, 178 St. George St.
221—Montreal East. M. M. Campbell, 95 Broadway.
249—Fallowfield, Ontario. Ernest Armstrong.
250—Sault Ste. Marie. James McDonald, 504 Queen St. E.
276—Skyland, Page Co., Va. N. Mackintosh,
277—Barrie, Ontario. R. F. Smith.
300—Halifax, N. S. Audler S. Lee, 551Gottingen St.
Canal Zone—37—Cristobal. F. E. Stevens.
156—Ancon. Arthur Haughton, Box 418.
China—222—Tientsin. Dr. George W. Twomey, 43 Rue de Amiraute.
Cuba—15—Havana. Ricardo N. Farres, Dominques, 7 Cerro.
England—296—Longton, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire. William Berry, 19 Weston Place, off Heathcote Road.
Egypt—173—Khartoum, Sudany. W. T. Moffat, Sudan Customs.
Germany—283—Dusseldorf. Hans Derrick Hulsmann, care R. A. Visser & Co.
Guatamala—315—Puerto Barrios. John R. Strange, United Fruit Co.
Hawaiian Islands—170—Leilehua, Oahu, Château Shanty.
272—Honolulu, Hawaii. Hubert T. Miller, Room 4, Silent Hotel.
Honduras, C. A.—70—La Ceiba. Jos. Buckly Taylor.
India—197—Calcutta. W. Leishman, 46 Wellesley St.
Mexico—68—Guadalajara, Jal. W. C. Money, Hotel Fenix, Calle Lopez, Cotilla Nos. 269 a 281.
Navy—71—U. S. *Arizona*. Elmer E. McLean.
Newfoundland—132—St. John's. P. C. Mars, Smallwood Bldg.
Nova Scotia—297—Dartmouth. W. E. Sievert, Portland St.
Porto Rico—46—Ensenada. M. B. Couch, P. O. Box 5.
Philippine Islands—198—Manila. W. W. Weston, De La Rama Bldg.
Virgin Islands—301—St. Thomas. Joseph Reynolds, The Grand Hotel.

SERVICES TO OUR READERS

Lost Trails, for finding missing relatives and friends, runs in alternate issues from "Old Songs That Men Have Sung."

Old Songs That Men Have Sung, a section of "Ask Adventure," runs in alternate issues from "Lost Trails."

Camp-Fire Stations: explanation in the second and third issues of each month. Full list in second issue of each month.

Various Practical Services to Any Reader: Free Identification Card in eleven languages (metal, 25 cents); Mail Address and Forwarding Service; Back Issues Exchanged; Camp-Fire Buttons, etc., runs in the last issue of each month.

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached*, are enclosed. (See footnote at bottom of page.) Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union. Be sure that the issuing office stamps the coupon in the left-hand circle.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

1. The Sea Part 1 American Waters
BERIAH BROWN, Coupeville, Wash. Ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting, small-boat sailing; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S.; fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks. (*See next section.*)

2. The Sea Part 2 British Waters
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care *Adventure*. Seamanship; navigation, old-time sailorizing, ocean-cruising, etc. Questions on the sea, ships and men local to the British Empire go to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brown.

3. The Sea Part 3 Statistics of American Shipping
HARRY E. RIESEBERG, Apartment 347-A, Kew Gardens, Washington, D. C. Historical records, tonnages, names and former names, dimensions, services, power, class, rig, builders, present and past ownerships, signals, etc., of all vessels of the American Merchant Marine and Government vessels in existence over five gross tons in the United States, Panama and the Philippines, and the furnishing of information and records of vessels under American registry as far back as 1760.

4. Islands and Coasts Part 1 Islands of Indian and Atlantic Oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care *Adventure*. Ports, trade, peoples, travel. (*See next section.*)

5. Islands Part 2 Haiti, Santo Domingo, Porto Rico, Virgin and Jamaica Groups
CHARLES BELL EMERSON, Adventure Cabin, Los Gatos, Calif. Languages, mining, minerals, fishing, sugar, fruit and tobacco production.

6. Islands Part 3 Cuba
WALLACE MONTGOMERY, Warner Sugar Co. of Cuba, Miranda, Oriente, Cuba. Geography, industries, people, customs, hunting, fishing, history and government.

7. ★ New Zealand; and the South Sea Islands Part 1 Cook Islands, Samoa
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Travel, history, customs; adventure, exploring, sport. (*Send International Reply Coupon for eleven cents.*)

8. ★ South Sea Islands Part 2 French Oceania (Tahiti, the Society, Paumoto, Marquesas); Islands of Western Pacific (Solomons, New Hebrides, Fiji, Tonga); of Central Pacific (Guam, Ladrone, Pelew, Caroline, Marshall, Gilbert, Ellice); of the Detached (Wallis, Penrhyn, Danger, Easter, Rotuma, Futuna, Pitcairn).
CHARLES BROWN, JR., Boite No. 167, Papeete, Tahiti, Society Islands, South Pacific Ocean. Inhabitants, history, travel, sports, equipment, climate, living conditions, commerce, pearling, vanilla and coconut culture. (*Send International Reply Coupon for eleven cents.*)

9. ★ Australia and Tasmania
PHILLIP NORMAN, 842 Military Road, Mosman, Sydney, N. S. W., Australia. Customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, history. (*Send International Reply Coupon for eleven cents.*)

10. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
FAY-COOPER COLE, Ph. D., Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Ill. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, inhabitants, history, institutions.

11. ★ New Guinea
L. P. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory of Papua, *via* Sydney, Australia. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, inhabitants, history, institutions. Questions regarding the measures or policy of the Government or proceedings of Government officers not answered (*Send International Reply Coupon for eleven cents.*)

★ ***(Enclose addressed envelop with International Reply Coupon for eleven cents.)***

12. Philippine Islands
Buck Connor, L. B. 4., Quartzsite, Ariz. History, inhabitants, topography, customs, travel, hunting, fishing, minerals, agriculture, commerce.

13. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. Halton, 1402 Lytton Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

14. Japan
Grace P. T. Knudson, Castine, Me. Commerce, politics, people, customs, history, geography, travel, agriculture, art, curios.

15. Asia Part 1 Arabia, Persia, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Borneo
Captain Beverley Giddings, care *Adventure.* Hunting, exploring, traveling, customs.

16. Asia Part 2 Siam, Andamans, Malay Straits, Straits Settlements, Shan States and Yunnan
Gordon MacCreagh, 21 East 14th St., New York. Hunting, trading, traveling, customs.

17. Asia Part 3 Coast of Northeastern Siberia, and Adjoining Waters
Capt. C. L. Oliver, care *Adventure.* Natives, language, mining, trading, customs, climate. Arctic Ocean: Winds, currents, depths, ice conditions, walrus-hunting.

18. ★ Asia Part 4 North China, Mongolia and Chinese Turkestan
George W. Twomey, M. D., 60 Rue de l'Amirauté, Tientsin, China. Natives, languages, trading, customs, climate and hunting. (*Send International Reply Coupon for five cents.*)

19. Africa Part 1 Sierra Leone to Old Calabar, West Africa, Southern and Northern Nigeria
Robert Simpson, care *Adventure.* Labor, trade, expenses, outfitting, living conditions, tribal customs, transportation.

20. ★ Africa Part 2 Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East, Uganda and the Upper Congo
Charles Beadle, La Roseraie, Cap d'Ail (Alpes Maritimes), France. Geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, adventure and sport. (*Send International Reply Coupon for five cents.*)

21. Africa Part 3 Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal and Zululand
Captain F. J. Franklin, Gulfport and Coast Enquiry Depot, Turnbull Bldg., Gulfport, Miss. Climate, shooting and fishing, imports and exports; health resorts, minerals, direct shipping routes from U. S., living conditions, travel, opportunities for employment. Free booklets on: Orange-growing, apple-growing, sugar-growing, maize-growing; viticulture; sheep and fruit ranching.

22. ✠ Africa Part 4 Portuguese East
R. G. Waring, Corunna, Ontario, Canada. Trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

23. Africa Part 5 Morocco
George E. Holt, care *Adventure.* Travel, tribes, customs, history, topography, trade.

24. Africa Part 6 Tripoli
Captain Beverley Giddings, care *Adventure.* Including the Sahara Tuaregs and caravan routes. Traveling, exploring, customs, caravan trade.

25. Africa Part 7 Egypt, Tunis, Algeria
(Editor to be appointed.)

26. ✠ Africa Part 8 Sudan
W. T. Moffat, Opera House, Southport, Lancashire, England. Climate, prospects, trading, traveling, customs, history. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

27. Turkey
J. F. Edwards, David Lane, East Hampton, N. Y. Travel, history, geography, politics, races, languages, customs, commerce, outdoor life, general information.

28. Asia Minor
(Editor to be appointed.)

29. Bulgaria, Roumania
(Editor to be appointed.)

30. Albania
Robert S. Townsend, 1447 Irving St., Washington, D. C. History, politics, customs, languages, inhabitants, sports, travel, outdoor life.

31. Jugo-Slavia and Greece
Lieut. William Jenna, Fort Clayton, Panama, C. Z. History, politics, customs, geography, language, travel, outdoor life.

32. Scandinavia
Robert S. Townsend, 1447 Irving St., Washington, D. C. History, politics, customs, languages, inhabitants, sports, travel, outdoor life.

33. Finland, Lapland and Russia
Aleko E. Lilius, care *Adventure.* History, customs, travel, shooting, fishing, big game, camping, climate, sports, export and import, industries, geography, general information. In the case of Russia, political topics, outside of historical facts will not be discussed.

34. Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Poland
Capt. Fred. F. Fleischer, care *Adventure.* History, politics, customs languages, trade opportunities, travel, sports, out-door life.

35. ✠ Great Britain
Thomas Bowen Partington, Constitutional Club, Northumberland Ave., W. C. 2, London, England. General information. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

36. South America Part 1 Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile
Edgar Young, care *Adventure.* Geography, inhabitants, history, industries, topography, minerals, game, languages, customs.

37. South America Part 2 Venezuela, the Guianas and Brazil
Paul Vanorden Shaw, 21 Claremont Ave., New York, N.Y. Travel, history, customs, industries, topography, inhabitants, languages, hunting and fishing.

38. South America Part 3 Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay
William R. Barbour, care *Adventure.* Geography, travel, agriculture, cattle, timber, inhabitants, camping and exploration, general information. Questions regarding employment not answered.

39. Central America
Charles Bell Emerson, Adventure Cabin, Los Gatos, Calif. Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, languages, game, conditions, minerals, trading.

40. Mexico Part 1 Northern
J. W. Whiteaker, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Border States of old Mexico—Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas. Minerals, lumbering, agriculture, travel, customs, topography, climate, inhabitants, hunting, history, industries.

41. Mexico Part 2 Southern; and Lower California
C. R. Mahaffey, Box 304, San José, Calif. Lower California; Mexico south of a line from Tampico to Mazatlan. Mining, agriculture, topography, travel, hunting, lumbering, history, inhabitants, business and general conditions.

42. Mexico Part 3 Southeastern
W. Russell Sheets, Spring and Popular Sts., Takoma Park, Md., Federal Territory of Quintana Roo and states of Yucatan and Campeche. Inhabitants, history and customs; archeology, topography, travel and explorations; business conditions, exploitation of lumber, hemp, chewing gum and oil.

43. ✠ Canada Part 1 Height of Land, Region of Northern Quebec and Northern Ontario (except Strip between Minn. and C. P. Ry.); Southeastern Ungava and Keewatin
S. E. Sangster ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber, customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

44. ✠ Canada Part 2 Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario
Harry M. Moore, Deseronto, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, mining, lumbering, agriculture, topography, travel. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

45. ✠ Canada Part 3 Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario
A. D. L. Robinson, 115 Huron St., Walkerville, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing; farm locations, wild lands, national parks. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

46. Canada Part 4 Hunters Island and English River District
T. F. Phillips, Department of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn. Fishing, camping, hunting, trapping, canoeing, climate, topography, travel.

47. Canada Part 5 Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta
(Editor to be appointed.)

48. ✠ Canada Part 6 Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie and Northern Keewatin
Reece H. Hague, The Pas, Manitoba, Canada. Homesteading, mining, hunting, trapping, lumbering and travel. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

49. ✠ Canada Part 7 Southeastern Quebec
Jas. F. B. Belford, Codrington, Ont., Canada. Hunting, fishing, lumbering, camping, trapping, auto and canoe trips, history, topography, farming, homesteading, mining, paper industry, water-power. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

50. Canada Part 8 Newfoundland
C. T. James, Bonaventure Ave., St. Johns, Newfoundland. Hunting, fishing, trapping, auto and canoe trips, topography; general information. (*Send International Reply Coupon for five cents.*)

★ (*Enclose addressed envelop with International Reply Coupon for five cents.*)
✠ (*Enclose addressed envelop with International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

51. Canada Part 9 New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island
FRED L. BOWDEN, 54 Mason Avenue, Binghamton, New York. Lumbering, hunting, fishing, trapping, auto and canoe trips, topography, farming and homesteading; general information.

52. Alaska
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 6720 Leland Way, Hollywood, Calif. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipment, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

53. Baffinland and Greenland
VICTOR SHAW, Box 958, Ketchikan, Alaska. Hunting, expeditions, dog-team work, whaling, geology, ethnology (Eskimo).

54. Western U. S. Part 1 Calif., Ore., Wash., Nev., Utah and Ariz.
E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23rd St., Los Angeles, Calif. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

55. Western U. S. Part 2 New Mexico
H. F. ROBINSON, 200-202 Korber Block, Albuquerque, N. M. Agriculture, automobile routes, Indians, Indian dances, including the snake dance; oil-fields; hunting, fishing, camping; history, early and modern.

56. Western U. S. Part 3 Colo. and Wyo.
(Editor to be appointed.)

57. Western U. S. Part 4 Mont. and the Northern Rocky Mountains
FRED W. EGLESTON, Bozeman, Mont. Agriculture, mining, northwestern oil-fields, hunting, fishing, camping, automobile tours, guides, early history.

58. Western U. S. Part 5 Idaho and Surrounding Country
R. T. NEWMAN, Box 833, Anaconda, Mont. Camping, shooting, fishing, equipment, information on expeditions, history and inhabitants.

59. Western U. S. Part 6 Tex. and Okla.
J. W. WHITEAKER, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Minerals, agriculture, travel, topography, climate, hunting, history, industries.

60. Middle Western U. S. Part 1 The Dakotas, Neb., Ia., Kan.
JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, care *Adventure*. Hunting, fishing, travel. Especially, early history of Missouri Valley.

61. Middle Western U. S. Part 2 Mo. and Ark.
JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*. Also the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big-timber sections.

62. Middle Western U. S. Part 3 Ind., Ill., Mich., Wis., Minn. and Lake Michigan
JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*. Fishing, clamming, hunting, trapping, lumbering, canoeing, camping, guides, outfits, motoring, agriculture, minerals, natural history, early history, legends.

63. Middle Western U. S. Part 4 Mississippi River
GEO. A. ZERR, Vine and Hill Sts., Crafton P. O., Ingram, Pa. Routes, connections, itineraries; all phases of river steamer and power-boat travel; history and idiosyncrasies of the river and its tributaries. Questions regarding methods of working one's way should be addressed to Mr. Spears. (*See section* 64.)

64. Middle Western U. S. Part 5 Great Lakes
H. C. GARDNER, 3302 Daisy Ave., Cleveland, Ohio. Seamanship, navigation, courses and distances, reefs and shoals, lights and landmarks, charts; laws, fines, penalties; river navigation.

65. Eastern U. S. Part 1 Adirondacks, New York; Lower Miss. (St. Louis down), Atchafalaya across La. swamps, St. Francis River, Arkansas Bottoms, North and East Shores of Lake Mich.
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif. Transcontinental and other auto-trail tours (Lincoln, National, Old Santa Fé, Yellowstone, Red Ball, Old Spanish Trail, Dixie Highway, Ocean to Ocean, Pike's Peak); regional conditions, outfits, suggestions; skiff, outboard, small launch river and lake tripping and cruising; trapping; fresh water and button shelling; wildcraft, camping, nature study.

66. Eastern U. S. Part 2 Motor-Boat and Canoe Cruising on Delaware and Chesapeake Bays and Tributary Rivers
HOWARD A. SHANNON, care of *Adventure*. Motor-boat equipment and management. Oystering, crabbing, eeling, black bass, pike, sea-trout, croakers; general fishing in tidal waters. Trapping and trucking on Chesapeake Bay. Water fowl and upland game in Maryland and Virginia. Early history of Delaware, Virginia and Maryland.

67. Eastern U. S. Part 3 Marshes and Swamplands of the Atlantic Coast from Philadelphia to Jacksonville
HOWARD A. SHANNON, care of *Adventure*. Okefinokee and Dismal, Okranoke and the Marshes of Glynn; Croatan Indians of the Carolinas. History, traditions, customs, hunting, modes of travel, snakes.

68. Eastern U. S. Part 4 Southern Appalachians
WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, care *Adventure*. Alleghanies, Blue Ridge, Smokies, Cumberland Plateau, Highland Rim. Topography, climate, timber, hunting and fishing, automobiling, national forests, general information.

69. Eastern U. S. Part 5 Tenn., Ala., Miss., N. and S. C., Fla. and Ga.
HAPSBURG LIEBE, care of *Adventure*. Except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

70. Eastern U. S. Part 6. Maine
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 70 Main Street, Bangor, Me. For all territory *west* of the Penobscot river. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

71. Eastern U. S. Part 7 Eastern Maine
H. B. STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Me. For all territory *east* of the Penobscot River. Hunting, fishing, canoeing, mountaineering, guides; general information.

72. Eastern U. S. Part 8 Vt., N. H., Conn., R. I., and Mass.
HOWARD R. VOIGHT, 108 Hobart St., New Haven, Conn. Fishing, hunting, travel, roads; business conditions, history.

73. Eastern U. S. Part 9 New Jersey
(Editor to be appointed.)

74. Eastern U. S. Part 10 Maryland
LAWRENCE EDMUND ALLEN, 201 Bowery Ave., Frostburg, Md. Mining, touring, summer resorts, historical places, general information.

A.—Radio

DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J. Telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets.

B.—Mining and Prospecting

VICTOR SHAW, Box 958, Ketchikan, Alaska. Territory anywhere on the continent of North America. Questions on mines, mining law, mining, mining methods or practise; where and how to prospect, how to outfit; how to make the mine after it is located; how to work it and how to sell it; general geology necessary for miner or prospector, including the precious and base metals and economic minerals such as pitchblende or uranium, gypsum, mica, cryolite, etc. Questions regarding investment or the merits of any particular company are excluded.

C.—Old Songs That Men Have Sung

A department for collecting hitherto unpublished specimens and for answering questions concerning all songs of the out-of-doors that have had sufficient virility to outlast their immediate day; chanteys, "forebitters," ballads—songs of outdoor men—sailors, lumberjacks, soldiers, cowboys, pioneers, rivermen, canal-men, men of the Great Lakes, voyageurs, railroad men, miners, hoboes, plantation hands, etc.—R. W. GORDON, care of *Adventure*.

D.—Weapons, Past and Present

Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers, ammunition and edged weapons. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district.)

1.—**All Shotguns, including foreign and American** makes; wing shooting. JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*.

2.—**All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers, including for**eign and American makes. DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. 3, Lock Box 75, Salem, Ore.

3.—**Edged Weapons, and Firearms Prior to 1800.** Swords, pikes, knives, battle-axes, etc., and all firearms of the flintlock, matchlock, wheel-lock and snaphaunce varieties. (Editor to be appointed.)

E.—Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*. Fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting and bait; camping-outfits; fishing-trips.

F.—Forestry in the United States

ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass. Big-game hunting, guides and equipment; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States. Questions on the policy of the Government regarding game and wild-animal life in the Forests.

G.—Tropical Forestry

WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, care *Adventure*. Tropical forests and forest products; their economic possibilities; distribution, exploration, etc.

H.—Aviation

LIEUT.-COL. W. G. SCHAUFFLER, JR., 2940 Newark St., N. W., Washington, D. C. Airplanes; airships; aeronautical motors; airways and landing fields; contests;

Aero Clubs; insurance; aeronautical laws; licenses; operating data; schools; foreign activities; publications. No questions answered regarding aeronautical stock-promotion companies.

I.—Army Matters, United States and Foreign

CAPT. FRED F. FLEISCHER, care *Adventure, United States:* Military history, military policy. National Defense Act of 1920. Regulations and matters in general for organized reserves. Army and uniform regulations, infantry drill regulations, field service regulations. Tables of organization. Citizens' military training camps. *Foreign:* Strength and distribution of foreign armies before the war. Uniforms. Strength of foreign armies up to date. History of armies of countries covered by Mr. Fleischer in general "Ask Adventure" section. *General:* Tactical questions on the late war. Detailed information on all operations during the late war from the viewpoint of the German high command. Questions regarding enlisted personnel and officers, except such as are published in Officers' Directory, can not be answered.

J.—Navy Matters

LIEUT. FRANCIS GREENE, U. S. N. R., 241 Eleventh Street, Brooklyn, N. Y. Regulations, history, customs, drill, gunnery; tactical and strategic questions, ships, propulsion, construction, classification; general information. Questions regarding the enlisted personnel and officers except such as contained in the Register of Officers can not be answered. International and constitutional law concerning Naval and maritime affairs.

K.-American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal

ARTHUR WOODWARD, 1244 ¼ Leighton Ave., Los Angeles, Calif. Customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions.

L.—First Aid on the Trail

CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., Falls City, Neb. Medical and surgical emergency care, wounds, injuries, common illnesses, diet, pure water, clothing, insect and snake-bite; industrial first aid and sanitation for mines, logging camps, ranches and exploring parties as well as for camping trips of all kinds. First-aid outfits. Meeting all health hazard, the outdoor life, arctic, temperate and tropical zones.

M.—Health-Building Outdoors

CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., Falls City, Neb. How to get well and how to keep well in the open air, where to go and how to travel. Tropical hygiene. General health-building, safe exercise, right food and habits, with as much adaptation as possible to particular cases.

N.—Railroading in the U. S., Mexico and Canada

R. T. NEWMAN, Box 833, Anaconda, Mont. General-office, especially immigration, work; advertising work, duties of station agent, bill clerk, ticket agent, passenger brakeman and rate clerk. General information.

O.—Herpetology

DR. G. K. NOBLE, American Museum of Natural History, 77th St., and Central Park West, New York, N. Y. General information concerning reptiles (snakes, lizards, turtles, crocodiles) and amphibians (frogs, toads, salamanders); their customs, habits and distribution.

P.—Entomology

DR. FRANK E. LUTZ, Ramsey, N. J. General information about insects and spiders; venomous insects, disease-carrying insects, insects attacking man, etc.; distribution.

Q.—STANDING INFORMATION

For **Camp-Fire Stations** write LAURENCE JORDAN, care *Adventure.*

For general information on **U. S.** and **its possessions** write Supt. of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications. For **U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries**, the Dept., of Com., Wash., D. C.

For the **Philippines, Porto Rico,** and customs receiverships in **Santo Domingo** and **Haiti**, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dept., Wash., D. C.

For **Alaska**, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For **Hawaii**, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also Dept. of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For **Cuba**, Bureau of Information, Dept. of Agri., Com. and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

The Pan-American Union for general information on **Latin-American matters** or for specific data. Address L. S. ROWE, Dir. Gen., Wash., D. C.

For **R. C. M. P.**, Commissioner Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can. Only unmarried British subjects, age 18 to 40, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs.

For **State Police of any State**, FRANCIS H. BENT, JR., care of *Adventure.*

For **Canal Zone**, the Panama Canal Com., Wash., D. C.

National **Rifle** Association of America, Brig. Gen. Fred H. Phillips, Jr., Sec'y, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Wash., D. C.

United States **Revolver** Ass'n. W. A. MORRALL, Sec'y-Treas., Hotel Virginia, Columbus, O.

National Parks, how to get there and what to do when there. Address National Park Service, Wash., D. C,

For whereabouts of **Navy men**, Bureau of Navigation, Navy Department, Wash., D. C.

Small Boat Sailing

A VAGABONDING in a genteel sense.

Request:—"I have a lot of questions to ask you and I don't know just how to begin. However, I'll tell you our plans, and trust you to tell us the faulty parts and your opinion of the whole undertaking. I hope you'll pardon the familiar tone of this letter but it truly seems that I know you because of having read so many of your stories.

Now, for the history. My wife and I are 22 and 23, respectively, and we have about $15,000.00 between us. We are planning on buying a boat and vagabonding in a genteel sense up and down both coasts of North and South America and making the boat our home. We expect to spend quite a little time in the West Indies. As I write this, I just happen to think that you really don't take care of very much of this outside of British Possessions in the West Indies. However, if this is so, we will just call this a friendly letter and you can steer me and my troubles off on somebody else.

To continue: we are planning to get a 35 to 45 foot auxiliary cruiser which we understand can be had in good shape for from $2,500.00 to $4,000.00. Is a boat that size small enough for two to handle and still large enough to be thoroughly seaworthy? If not, what would you suggest.

What licenses are required for a jaunt of this sort and what examinations are necessary for obtaining the licenses? Is a passport necessary? If so, what are the steps required for the issuance of one?

Now, then, the main thing. We will have an income of roughly $500.00 a year left. What opportunities are there for making expense money and not only expense money but is there a chance to do more than that and make enough to put some by, and still live without touching our other income?

If you use this letter please don't mention my name or address and thanking you a thousand times over for your courtesy and praying that I haven't given you too much trouble, I remain,"
——, Calif.

Reply, by Captain A. E. Dingle:—Most of your queries can be lumped and answered in a general way. I assume that you and friend wife are husky, fond of hardship, and THOROUGH SAILORS. And by sailors I mean, you both are capable of taking care of such a craft as you mention IN HEAVY SEAS OR MAYBE A HURRICANE IN THE

OPEN SEA. If not, stay ashore, for deep-sea cruising in small boats is no sport for the novice or half capable. Luck may bring you through once, and let you down the next time.

But about your letter. You are Americans, and will have an American boat. Write to the man handling sea matters of the U. S. A. And for passports, write your Secretary of State.

Regarding making expenses; there is nothing you can do with a boat, except rent her for fishing or sailing parties. If you trade with her you lose your yacht privileges. And in most places the natives won't welcome your intrusion on their little bit of livelihood. Frankly, unless you can jump in and do something ashore in various ports, journalism, painting, or lecturing, or whatever else you may be able to do, I can not give you much hope of making money out of such a trip. Upkeep of the boat will cost about $500.00 a year, if she's a real forty-five-foot cruiser and you keep her in shape properly.

The full statement of the departments, as given in this issue, is printed only in alternate issues.

Indian Invention

WHAT the American aborigine has given to the world.

Request:—"Having read with pleasure and profit the letters and answers to questions on all subjects, I am taking the liberty of asking you to fill out the following list as far as possible as to what the North American Indian has given to the world, and if those I mention are not correct, would be glad to be corrected.

- In foods:
  - Maize or Indian corn
  - Maple sugar
- Cooking:
  - The enveloping of meat, fowls, etc., in a wrapping of clay and then baking in an open fire or charcoal pit. (Many French chefs in Paris use this method substituting *papier-mâché* for the wrapping.)
- Games:
  - Lacrosse
  - Hockey or Shinny (see Tennis)
  - and possibly baseball
- Transportation:
  - The canoe (modified in the material only)
  - Snowshoes (Unchanged)

In the following I may be severely criticized or even proven in error, but I fully believe I am but giving credit where credit is due.

The sign language common among practically all of the N. A. Indians was the origin of our wigwag system so extensively used in our Army and Navy.

Also the sign language as taught in our deaf and dumb institutions, and there are several minor uses to which it is applied.

Smoke and fire signals as used by them to convey a vast number of definite messages, each clear and distinct in itself, was the forerunner of our semaphore and searchlight as used for the conveying of messages.

They also had a knowledge of a sound conveyor that was not through the air and would pass unheard and unseen unless you were in contact with this particular conveyor. I have reference to the conveying of sound by water. As a boy when in swimming we used to signal the other swimming places either up or down river for over a mile by striking two stones together under water, and our Indian boy friends understood it and were more adept than we, although one could not read the messages of the other."—M. D. LITTLE, Long Island City, N. Y.

Reply, by Mr. Woodward:—Your letter was passed on to me and am glad to be able to give you what assistance I can in regard to the problems confronting you.

In the food lines, both maize and maple sugar are attributed to the North American Indian as his gift to the world food supply. The method of wrapping fowls and animals in clay (or leaves) is not necessarily peculiar to the inhabitants of the North American continent. I believe the South Sea Islanders also have such a practise and quite likely that culinary process is found in other parts of the world.

Modified forms of Lacrosse, shinny and baseball were known to the Europeans prior to the discovery of America.

The canoe is not confined to North America either in shape or material. There are canoes in the South Seas approximating shape and size of the Indian barks and among the natives of eastern Siberia birch bark canoes as well as conical birch bark houses were in vogue when that country was first described by western European travelers. Forms of snowshoes and skiis were also known to the Siberian natives and skiis were also known to the people of the Scandinavian countries.

The sign language and the system of wigwag signals or smoke and fire signals did not originate with the Indians.

The Italians had a complex system of hand signals as did other European nations. In fact, sign language is common the world over. Read the story of Captain John Smith's adventures in the Near East for his description of the cunning use of signal lights at night which enabled the commander of the army under whom he served to take a heathen town. Fire and smoke have been used as warning signals from time immemorial and long before the American continent was ever heard of.

As to the signaling under water, I know of that practise but can not say definitely whether or not it pertained to the Indians alone. In China, where a vast system of waterways serve to connect different sections of the country, in ancient times it was the custom to send signals along the water by holding a huge metal gong close to the surface and pounding out code messages. These gongs were known by different names and were used in war to summon troops or tell of enemy movements. There are but four or five of those ancient primitive telegraph instruments now in existence according to the information I have. One such gong was sold some few years ago by a collector of Chinese antiques living in Chicago to a wealthy collector in London.

Yes, it is always good to give credit where credit is due but at times it is difficult to do that. So many customs and habits of man are widely scattered and to say such and such a people originated this or that is stretching things a trifle. However all we can do is live and learn.

Address your question direct to the expert in charge, NOT to the magazine.

Dish-Rag Gourds

COMMERCIAL possibilities of the Japanese luffa.

Request:—"There is a plant grown (I think in considerable quantities) in Japan known as loofah or luffa, the fruit of which is a kind of coarse sponge, imported into this and other countries in bales.

I have found, I believe, certain commercial possibilities in this article, but find the price here and also in the London market to be approximately eight cents each for larger sizes.

The question is: Can these plants be raised in America and in what soil and climate? Where can seeds be obtained, also planting, cultivating and harvesting directions?

I should need to produce them in quantities to retail at ten cents to twenty cents each, allowing for a first cost of five cents or six cents to make it pay. It may be that labor is too high to compete with Oriental production, as presumably the Japanese hold a monopoly and could reduce the price in the face of competition.

There is not much demand for the article as offered but I believe I can make them of a quality to command ready and large sale.

Any information whatever of general or specific nature you may give me on this subject, will be highly appreciated."——, Detroit, Mich.

P. S.—Is this a tropical, semi-tropical, or temperate zone plant, requiring rich, low or well drained soil?

I would prefer no publication of this letter, but if so please do not use my name.

Reply, by Miss Knudson:—I assume the plant you refer to in your letter of August 12th is the Acatangulus Gourd, called interchangeably in this country Chinese loofa, luffa, dish-cloth, dish-rag gourd, and the seed is classified commercially under the heading "Ornamental Gourds."

This is neither raised nor exported in Japan in sufficient quantities as yet to be taken much account of commercially, it seems, for no mention of it is made in any late trade reports, export lists or year books. I have seen the stuff for sale in stores in Japan and remember buying one piece as a curio when I first visited Japan.

You can purchase seed right in this country of W. Atlee Burpee Co., Seed Growers, Phila., Pa., or of Peter Henderson Co., 35-37 Cortlandt St., New York City. The plant, of which the luffa is the dried and cleaned fruit, is an annual climber of rapid and luxuriant growth to from twenty to thirty feet in a single temperate-zone season. The seed is not expensive, and I fancy the cultivation will be easy enough so that you may realize your dreams. I am not horticulturist enough to know of what zone the plant is native, but I do know it has been raised here in Maine in just an ordinary home garden.

All the gourds are free from garden pests—a fact in your favor. I should think, from my limited knowledge, that in a reasonably rich and well cultivated soil almost anywhere in the United States, this plant may be grown successfully. Planting, cultivating and harvesting directions you can undoubtedly obtain wherever you buy the seeds. Childs, Floral Park, N. Y., do a lot with unique and freak plants. They may be able to help you. Then, if you want to know about the Japanese method of culture, write our own Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.; also Director of Bureau of Agriculture, Imperial Government Department of Agriculture and Commerce, Tokyo, Japan. There is a Japan Seed Co., South Norwalk, Conn.

I think you will find the whole matter fairly easy to get at. The Japanese may hold a commercial monopoly merely because no others have cared to take this gourd seriously. The Japanese love to monkey and fuss with queer agricultural products, you know. They are famous for that sort of thing.

"Ask Adventure" service costs you nothing whatever but reply postage and self-addressed envelop.

Broadcasting

IT STARTED only a short time ago —and now look at it.

Request:—"Will you be so kind and inform the undersigned of the following?

When was radio broadcasting the first time successfully accomplished? I read during Harding's campaign. My friend claims he heard broadcasting fifteen years ago."—JOHN KREMAR, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Reply, by Mr. McNicol:—Those of us who were radio telegraph bugs prior to the days of radiophone broadcasting, remember the first radiophone transmission of a bulletin nature as the boat race reports sent out by De Forest in the summer of 1907 (Lake Erie). In 1908-09 De Forest sent out opera music from the Metropolitan Opera House, New York. In the fall of 1916 De Forest sent from his Highbridge Station, New York, music from phonograph records. In those days the only listeners were the radio telegraph boys—the radio telegraph sets in use picked up the radiophone transmission.

In January 1920, station CFKC, Montreal, began experimental radiophone tests. Harold J. Power, Medford Hillside, Mass., sent out music three evenings weekly beginning December, 1916. KDKA, Pittsburgh began broadcasting on December 23, 1920, and WJZ (at Newark, N. J.) on October 3, 1921. The Detroit *News* opened its broadcast station on September 1, 1920. WEAF was opened on July 25, 1922.

Of course, it should not be overlooked that radio telephony had long been under development prior to the time broadcasting was inaugurated. In 1906, Fessenden radio telephoned over a distance of eleven miles. In 1907, the present writer experimented with and wrote an extensive technical paper on the subject of radio telephony.

Broadcasting of organized entertainments on schedule began with the opening of KDKA in December 1920, but as noted above, there were several earlier transmissions of an irregular order.

Idaho

TRAPPING in winter and working in summer.

Request:—"Have heard quite a lot about Idaho and have always wanted to go there, so will ask you a few questions:

1. What part of Idaho is a good place for trapping?
2. Is there an oversupply of trappers in most parts of the country?
3. What is the population of Sand Point and main industries?
4. In what part of Idaho is the most fruit raised and what kind?
5. Do very many different kinds of wild berries grow there?

Now a little explanation; my father and myself would like to go some place where there is good trapping (my father is an experienced trapper) and where one could get work during the summer. Also we would like to go into fruit raising. (Of course we don't expect to find the two together.)"—HERMAN WOLHOWE, Wahpeton, N. D.

Reply, by Mr. Newman:—I will state that you will find good trapping in Boundary County close to Bonners Ferry, in fact many people earn their livelihood during the winter season by trapping within not more than 20 miles of Bonners Ferry, although there is good trapping throughout the northern part of Idaho.

The population of Sand Point, Idaho, in 1920, the last census, was 2876.

The most fruit is raised in the ten counties mentioned, Boundary, Bonner, Kootenai, Benewah, Idaho, Latah, Lewis, Nez Perce, Shoshone, and Clearwater.

Just at the present time a branch of the Spokane Fruit Growers' Company is being formed in the district covered by these counties for the purpose of reaching the best markets and securing the highest prices for the annual crops of strawberries, apples, pears, potatoes and other products.

You will find many wild blackberries, Oregon grapes, and wild strawberries growing here.

Around Sand Point you will find a large lumber industry, and you can secure employment there during the summer.

For your information, I take pleasure in sending you under separate cover a booklet on these counties, which will give you additional information.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible*. All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

JONES, WILLIAM. Last heard of in Tacoma, Wash. Any information will be appreciated by his son.—Address ARTHUR JONES, H. M. C. S. Patrician, Esquimalt, B. C.

ROBINSON, JAMES R. Last heard of he was employed on the Mexican National Railways about two years ago. Any information will be appreciated by his sister.—Address MRS. FRANCES MULL, Box 78, Monongahela, Pa.

SHARPE, CECIL. Write or come home at once. M. and I both longing to see you. Mother died April, 1924. Same address.—DAD.

WINDROSS, RAYMOND H. Last heard of in Portland, Maine, and he left there for either Canada or Seattle. Height about 5 feet 9 inches, black hair, dark complexion, brown eyes, medium build, with clear-cut features. Typewriter mechanic by trade, and is probably working in some typewriting agency. Any information will be appreciated.—Address C. H. UNDERWOOD, P. O. Box 118, Cape Cottage, Maine.

SCHUDOLSKA, ESTHER. Was adopted by a nurse in 1909 from St. Vincent's Home, Phila., Pa. Name was changed to Kate. Supposed to be taken to New York. Your sisters and brothers are now together. Please write me where you are. Will send money if you need it.—Address MISS MARY SCHUDOLSKA, 1070 Germantown Ave., Phila., Pa.

SMITH, GROVER C. Formerly of Fresno, Calif. Will you please write to your wife at same old address? Our little daughter is now 6 years old.—EDNA B. SMITH.

HYDRICK, EDITH ADELAIDE. (Maiden name Gillgan.) Last seen at her aunt's home in East Orange, N. J. Last communication with me from 82 Williams St., Brooklyn, N. Y. about four years ago. Any information will be appreciated.—Address DIXIE, care of *Adventure.*

When writing LOST TRAILS in answer to an advertisement please give the date of the issue in which your name appeared.

KILLIE, FRANK. Why don't you write. Have you forgotten Bell Meade? A different home and love awaits your return. You can write me either in care of ROSA BYERS, 510 Bryan Ave., Danville, Ill., or BERT at 1468 Folsom St., San Francisco, Calif.

DAVIS, WILLIAM A. Age about 50 years. Left home about 28 years ago for Watertown, S. D. Last heard from at Aberdeen, South Dakota, 21 years ago. Mother, brothers and sisters are anxious to hear from him. Any information will be appreciated.—Address MRS. ANNA L. SHEARMAN, Watertown, New York.

McMILLAN, JAMES. Please let me know your address and I will send you your things.—Address EUNICE MCMILLAN, Monroe Hotel, West Monroe St., Jacksonville, Fla.

SELLENS, ROBERT. Settled in Knox County, Ill., in the year 1854. Relatives and friends of this man please communicate with me.—Address WILLIAM CHURCHILL, 6541 S. State St., Chicago, Ill.

BURQUETTE, FRENCHIE. Write your old friend "Chap," have good news for you.—Address S. KITCHEW, U. S. V. Hospital, care of Ward 3, Dawson Springs, Kentucky.

POP. Please communicate with GORDON and FRANCIS.

THE following have been inquired for in either the December 10 or December 30, 1925, issue of Adventure. They can get the name and address of the inquirer from this magazine:

BACON, Leo; Brownell, Douglas; Bohannan, Delbert; Deval, Ralph; Freel or Friel, William or Sydney; Halton, Fred; McLaughlin, Francis; Macklain, Charles Laurance; Rogers, Arthur; Thomas, William, Isabelle, Fred Arthur and Frank; Welch, Andrew; Werner, Andy G. A.

MISCELLANEOUS: James Moses, Joe Vreo, Jack Spellman and Mac Macleod; Mitchell, Wm. K.; Sanborn, Burke *et al.* or any member of the old Staff Non-Commissioned Officers Club of Coblenz; W. W. W.

UNCLAIMED MAIL

PALMER, George Jack.

UNCLAIMED MANUSCRIPTS

ATKINS, E. E. S. Jr.; Allen, Mrs. Mable; Ashby, George, Aber, Loureine A.; Bayless, Dorothy; Banks, Jimmie; Bennett, Thomas T.; Brady, Patrick; Blum, N. A.; Buchanan, James; Breathm, Hastlar Gal.; Bieker, Mrs. Berna; Bea, M. B.; Crafts, H. A.; Chrisholm, Bryon; Cardie, Sinn; Caney, Jack; Cuttriss, C. A.; Cortelli, Fatima; Crafts, L. S.; Currie, Mildred; Colwell, Miss L. Margaret; Coxey, Willard; Christian, Happy; Cole, John; Dowson, Edward; Danziger, Adolphe; Denk, Ernest; Duncan, D. S.; Duplanti, Izora; Doran, E. F.; Edwards, Henry A.; Emerson, F. S.; Exner, Donald W.; Edgar, Paul; Frandsen, R. M.; Ferguson, C. C.; Gilfillan, Ruth; Gaylord, Alfred; Gene, Frenchie; Gray, Laban; Happy, H.; Hungerford, G. E.; Hilles, Lieut. Wm. U. S. M. C.; Huntington, C.; Hurst, Freda; Holston, S. C.; Horn, Charles; Hunter, E. Desbrosses Jr.; Hall, Kenneth Earle; Haddix, Hal; Henderson, M. G.; Halliday, Stephen: Irvin, T. W.; J. M. C.; King, J. D.; Kelly, D.; Kimsey, R. W.; King, Homer B.; Kahele, Edward Augustine; Kleipe, George Ralph; Lynch, W.; Livingston, J. K.; LaGlaire, Peter; Loeck, A. J.; Loschik, S. T.; Letton-Dow, Ann; Marilee, Nelson; Matter, James K.; Miths, B. Radke; Moran, Edward J.; Mosse, James; MacIllrath, W. R.; Murphy, Elsbeth; Madison, Artell; McCravey, E. L.; Mennet, Geo.; Major, Max D.; Merritt, Florence; Morris, Troy; McGinsey, Fred; Moore, Earl; McCurdy, J. C.; Meade, Joseph H.; McBlair, Robert; Maus, Forrest L.; McDonald, Richard H.; Moore, E. V.; Mann, Owen; Noble, George; O'Farrel, Patrick; Ober, Bertha; Oangham, Rosebud Starr; O'Malion, Roy; Pierce, Samuel S.; Perry, James; Paterson, Robert G.; Paradis, A. B.; Patten, Lewis E.; Polowe, David; Presler, Phil.; Pryal, Charles L.; Price, Bertha M.; Roe, Charles; Robinson, Jack P.; Robertson, Mrs. Chester; Rice, Alex.; Roland, Tom; Rhodes, Carrie L.; Ringer, Robert Derr; Rhodes, M. Benbow; Reid, Allan; Rockwood, T. K.; Stillions, George; Schmidt, Alex. R.; Sprague, T. R.; Smalley, Jack G.; Singlev, Anton; Saidmore, John C.; Seabury, Ralph; Spaulding, E. D.; Strauch, Hugo; Sturges, Effingham, McKay; Trekell, Mrs. Cynthia; Todd, Homer Eps; Tell, William; Trannack, C. V.; Warner, J. E.; Weston, Edward; Wittell, Chester; Wilman, Cynthia; Webber, E. C.; Wetzel, Lewis.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

JANUARY 30TH ISSUE

Besides the **three complete novelettes** mentioned on the second contents page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

HIS SERVICE — ***Warren P. Staniford***
When the doughboys came to Japan.

HO-HO-HO — ***Albert Richard Wetjen***
The skipper's laugh did not signify merriment.

THE PROFANED SHOVEL — ***Edmund P. Little***
A Swede on an open hearth!

ME-ALI — ***L. Paul***
Sailors and circus mix.

LA RUE OF THE 88 Part IV — ***Gordon Young***
Special cowboy edition of the Perez *Mercury!*

PLATO — ***Post Sargeant***
A great adventure of a super-mind.

GRAY GHOST — ***F. St. Mars***
Lynx law.

STILL FARTHER AHEAD

THE THREE ISSUES following the next will contain *long* stories by W. C. Tuttle, L. Patrick Greene, Leonard H. Nason, Fairfax Downey, T. S. Stribling, W. Townend, Will Levington Comfort, F. R. Buckley and Charles Victor Fischer; and short stories by Robert Carse, L. Paul, James Parker Long, Alan LeMay, George E. Holt, Clements Ripley, John Webb, S. B. H. Hurst, William Byron Mowery, John Dorman and others.

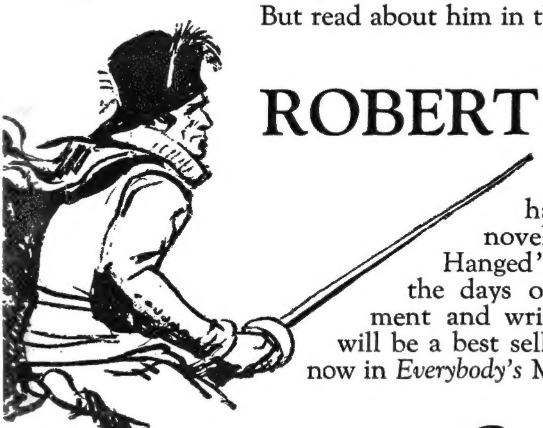
"The Man They Hanged"

Who Was He?

They called him a bloody pirate—murderer—cutthroat—thief. They accused him of every crime they could invent. They blackened his name, disgraced his family . . . Before a false court he was tried. Perjured witnesses swore against him. A craven judge denied him justice. He was convicted, sentenced and hanged—to save the very nobles he had served, innocently, honestly and too trustingly.

Who was he?—this gallant, fearless gentleman, this splendid sea captain? His name was Captain William Kidd, and he . . .

But read about him in the thrilling story, "The Man They Hanged."



It's by

ROBERT W. CHAMBERS

The prince of story tellers. Mr. Chambers has written a great number of the most popular novels ever penned in English. "The Man They Hanged" is undoubtedly his greatest. It's a tale of the days of Old New York. Crowded with excitement and written in a glowing, colorful way, this story will be a best seller when published in book form. Read it now in *Everybody's* Magazine.

This is only one feature of Everybody's Magazine ***There are—***

Stories of Real Life

Stories of achievement, happiness, and success—of men and women who are doing worth-while things. Each story is the actual narrative of some person and what he has done. It mirrors your own hopes and ambitions, your failures and trials—as experienced by others. You get an insight into the lives of those who are directing the affairs of today. Worth-while stories of worth-while people. You'll enjoy them.

And fiction stories, too. *Everybody's* short stories rank with its serials. Such brilliant writers as these contribute their best work: Achmed Abdullah, William Slavens McNutt, Will Levington Comfort, Courtney Ryley Cooper, Ben Ames Williams, Samuel Merwin, and many others. THE OLD OR THE NEW is another department you'll like. Here are given, each month, two outstanding stories by master writers, one by a genius of days gone by, the other by a more recent author. H. G. Wells, O. Henry, Edith Wharton, Richard Harding Davis, James B. Connolly, Owen Wister, are but a few of those represented.

This is a glimpse, just a peek at the contents of this great magazine. Scores of pictures and illustrations—and a whole rotogravure section.

1st in fiction

Everybody's Magazine

ON EVERY NEWS-STAND

Why Did Pirates Wear Whiskers?

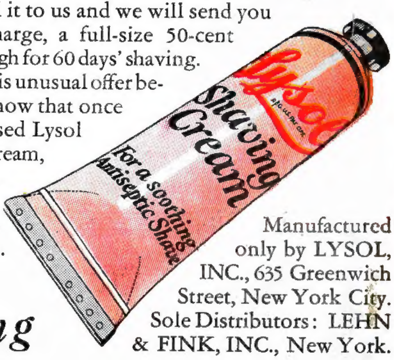
In days of old the Pirate bold feared the razor far more than the cutlass. The swashbuckling ferocity that so successfully terrorized his enemies had disastrous results when applied to his own face.

Shaving—even in a hurry—has become much safer since Lysol Shaving Cream appeared. Safer, easier and much more pleasant. Lysol Shaving Cream gives quantities of clean billowy lather. It quickly softens the toughest beard. It contains just the right amount of the famous antiseptic Lysol to make it soothing and healing. It protects the skin when torn or cut by the razor and guards against infection.

Lysol Shaving Cream is antiseptic without the slightest irritating effect on the skin or any unpleasant odor. It is the ideal shaving cream for health, convenience and comfort.

Full Size Tube Free

Fill in your name and address on the coupon below, mail it to us and we will send you without charge, a full-size 50-cent tube—enough for 60 days' shaving. We make this unusual offer because we know that once you have used Lysol Shaving Cream, you will never want to be without it again.



Manufactured only by LYSOL, INC., 635 Greenwich Street, New York City. Sole Distributors: LEHN & FINK, INC., New York.

Lysol Shaving Cream

(PRINT NAME AND ADDRESS PLAINLY IN INK)

Dept. LSC